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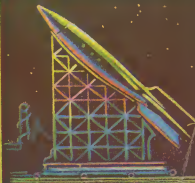
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Dynamic Science Fiction

Cover by Milton Luros

ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

FEATURE STORY

- DOUBLE IDENTITY** Raymond Z. Gallun 12
They were no longer human, and they feared the action of humans...

NOVELET

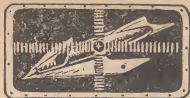
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News and views of the science-fiction scene, plus recollections of yesterday.

Illustrations by Luros, Murphy, and Orban

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INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM

SCIENCE fiction is distinct in that it possesses the most loyal, voracious, and enthusiastic reading audience of any type of literature. These readers write letters to the discussion columns; sometimes maintain massive collections; correspond with one another; publish their own magazines; and travel vast distances to attend conventions. Just what, one might ask, brought all this about?

When Hugo Gernsback published *Amazing Stories* in 1926 he inaugurated a "Discussions" column. The readers who wrote letters to this department soon started to correspond amongst themselves, and this correspondence resulted in the formation of science and science fiction discussion clubs. The earliest of these were the International Scientific Association and the Scienceeers, both of which were organized in 1929. Several other organizations were formed and out of these early clubs came the first fan magazines: *Cosmology*, *The Time Traveler*, and *Science Fiction Digest*. However, the formation of the Science Fiction League by Hugo Gernsback in April, 1934 did more to bring forth a unified fan-group than all previous

organizations combined. *Wonder Stories* was the voice of the SFL, and fans joined by the hundreds.

In 1936 the first inter-city fan meeting was held in Philadelphia and at this gathering were laid plans for a World Science Fiction Convention to be held in New York City in July, 1939. This one materialized, and was followed by international affairs in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Toronto, Cincinnati, Portland, New Orleans, and Chicago (again). This latter affair attracted over 1000 attendees and was the greatest of them all. The next convention will be held in Philadelphia this year (Labor Day weekend) and the readers of this department will be kept posted on all of the up-to-the-minute and behind-the-scenes news.

At any rate, science fiction fandom is a force which must be recognized. And it is being recognized more and more. Why is this? The answer is simple: the science fiction fans have taken over the field itself—many of the editors and writers of today were the fans of yesterday!

For those interested in the background and history of the science fiction fan movement we strongly recommend "The Immortal Storm" by

Sam Moskowitz, published by Henry Burwell, Jr., 459 Sterling Street, NE, Atlanta, Georgia.

MR. SCIENCE FICTION

WE BELIEVE the first time the name of Forrest J. Ackerman appeared in print was in 1929 issue of *Wonder Stories Quarterly* in which Forrie said, "Although I am only twelve years old..." From that time until the present the name of Forrest J. Ackerman has been synonymous with science fiction and science fiction fandom.

4e (or 4SJ) as he is known to his incalculable scientific friends and admirers, has devoted his entire life to the propagation of science fiction: he is a fan foremost, but has also written, edited, and published professionally. At the present time he derives his livelihood from stf, in that he is an agent for writers and a bookseller. (He decided that the atom bomb might fail and, after the war, resigned his position in order to devote the remaining years of his life to the literature he loves.)

To attempt to describe in a few words, the impact Ackerman has made upon the field of science fiction would be ludicrous. This tall, handsome, blond Californian was on the editorial staffs of the first fan magazines, *The Time Traveler* and *Science Fiction Digest* in the early thirties; he was instrumental in organizing the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society in 1934 (the oldest fan organization in the world); he possesses what is probably the most ready complete collection of scientification extant; and his knowledge of the field is incontestable. Furthermore, Ackerman is a true philanthropist: he has donated money to innumerable fan publications; he conceived the Big Pond Fund which was to bring Ted Carnell, of England, to the Philcon (the 1947 World Convention). Although this plan did not meet

with success until 1949, it was through no fault of Forrie's. In 1951, fearing that the campaign to import Walt Willis from Ireland to Chicago for the 10th Anniversary Science Fiction Convention would be unsuccessful, he personally offered to pay the entire cost himself! The success of Shelby Vick's campaign did not diminish this gigantic gesture. Furthermore, during the war, Ackerman spent hundreds of dollars sending books and magazines to England and is partially responsible for the continuance of the English fan field during that bleak period.

It must be mentioned that this is not to be misconstrued as a description of the average stfan. There is only *one* Ackerman; there never was any other like him. And it is firmly believed that there never will be another. He is, in reality, "Mr. Science Fiction."

SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

From the World of Books: Readers of *Dynamic* will be interested to learn that its versatile editor, Robert W. Lowndes, has sold "Mystery of the Third Mine" to John C. Winston. It is a juvenile, and is scheduled for April release.... L. Sprague de Camp has just completed the rough draft of his "History of Science Fiction" (it includes a long chapter on fandom) for Hermitage House.... Darrell C. Richardson and Oswald Train are collaborating on a biography of Edgar Rice Burroughs.... Tom Clareson, Vice-Chairman of the 11th World Science Fiction Convention, will complete his dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in June. It will be titled, "The Impact of Science on Literature," and the Oxford University Press is interested.... John V. Baltadonis, the "Paul of the fan artists" during the 30's, returns to science fiction illus-

trating with the dust-wrapper of the next Prime Press release, "Alien Flesh" by Seabury Quinn.... Pocket Books: Bantam Books has reprinted Aldous Huxley's utopian classic, "Brave New World"—and "Space on My Hands", Fredric Brown's collection, originally published by Shasta Publishers. New release from Lion Books is Jerry Sohl's "The Haploids", a reprint of the Rinehart edition. And, in case you haven't heard, Signet has published "The Puppet Masters" by Robert A. Heinlein in a 25¢ edition, and Pocket Books has come out with a quarter edition of Raymond J. Healy's anthology of previously unpublished stories, "New Tales of Space and Time".

The 11th World Science Fiction Convention: The latest news from the Convention bigwigs is that Willy Ley, probably science fiction's biggest name as far as the general public is concerned, has been selected as guest of honor.... Robert Bloch and Isaac Asimov will be the MC's, one at the banquet, and the other during the entertainment session.... Dave Hammond, who edited the first Convention *Progress Report*, suddenly entered the Air Force. His job has been placed in the capable hands of one of science fiction's brightest new stars, Alan E. Nourse.... Tom Clareson has accepted a foreign teaching position, but will return to the USA this summer to resume his duties as Vice-Chairman of the Convention.... Celebrities who have expressed intentions of attending reads like a "Who's Who of Science Fiction": E. E. ("Skylark") Smith, George O. Smith, Ralph Milne Farley, L. Sprague de Camp, Groff Conklin, W. Lawrence Hamling, Robert W. Lowndes, Bea Mahaffey, Lester del Rey—just to mention a few. If you haven't already joined, send your dollar bill to: Membership Committee, 11th World S-F Convention, Box 2019, Philadelphia 3, Pa. You will receive a membership card plus all progress reports and advance information. Also, the member-

ship card will be your ticket to the best time of your life!

News and Views: Fantasy Magazine, Lester del Rey's latest, was to be called *Fantasy Unlimited*. We think the latter a better title.... *Fantasy Magazine*, incidentally, was the title of science fiction's greatest fan magazine, originally known as *Science Fiction Digest*.... Fred Pohl's *Astonishing Stories*, published in the early 40's, was to be titled *Incredible Stories*. This title has still to be used... Remember Robert Fuqua who, along with Julian Krupa, illustrated most of the issues of *Amazing Stories* during the late 30's after Raymond A. Palmer became editor? His name is really Joe W. Tillotson, and is still illustrating for Palmer (*Other Worlds*).... An interesting duplication of titles occurred when Poul Anderson appeared in February's *Science Fiction Quarterly* with "The Green Thumb" and L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt were represented in the February *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* with a story of the same title. Both, curiously enough, were listed first on the contents page. This is probably the first simultaneous duplication, but certainly not the first duplication *per se*. For instance, "Faster than Light" has been used four times.... E. Everett Evans, the "Grand Old Man" of fandom and late-life pro-success, and Thelma D. Hamm (who has sold to F&SF, *If* and *Imagination*) were married Friday, February 13th. Forrie Ackerman and wife Wedayne attended... young sf artist, whose work has appeared in *Fantasy Book* and the Mexican science fiction magazine, *Los Cuentos Fantásticos*, passed away last December. He was only 25. His son, middle-named for Forrest J. Ackerman (Michael Forrest) was, by an amazing coincidence, born on Forrie's 36th birthday, 24 November '52. Ackerman, incidentally, is scheduled to do the book reviews for a brand-new magazine which hasn't even been named yet.

It will be edited by a famous science fiction fan.

The Scientifilms: Edward G. Robinson, Jr. and Charles Chaplin, Jr. will appear in "Space Girls" which takes place in the year 6842. This will be an Albert Zugsmith production.... Bernard Girard and Richard Dorso have purchased "Robots Tell No Tales" and are trying to get Cary Grant for the starring role... "Donovan's Brain" will soon be produced by Allan Dowling Productions (an independent outfit). Curt Siodmak, who wrote the novel, has also done the screen play.... From Aubrey Wisberg and Jack Pollexfen (also independent) will come "The Neanderthal Man," which is about a scientist who, through the injection of a serum, devolutionizes himself and becomes a caveman.... Lippert Productions ("Rocketship X-M") are now shooting "Project X," a film of an advanced civilization living underseas.... Republic has commenced filming "Commando Cody, Sky Marsershal of the Universe," a space opera serial. Originally this was planned for video consumption, but Republic made a quick change of plans.... We might mention that Universal-International are now at work on "Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Boris Karloff will be co-starred.... Going the rounds now is "Captive Women," originally called, "3000 A. D.," an RKO production. It tells of the Mutates (descendants of those who have been disfigured by atomic blasts) and the Norms (Normals) a thousand years from now. The Mutates, incidentally, are the heroes.

The Stf. Fan World: In addition to the annual world convention 1933 will present quite a few smaller regional conferences. The annual Disclave, sponsored by the Washington Science Fiction Society, will be held in Washington, D. C., at the Hotel Statler, March 22nd, commencing at one P. M.... The Fantasy Veterans Association will hold their third annual

conference at Werdermann's Hall, 3rd Avenue at 16th Street, NYC, on April 19th.... Then in May will be held the Indian Lakes Conference, Indian Lakes, Ohio. Communicate with Dr. C. L. Barrett, 119 S. Madriver, Bellefontaine, Ohio, for details. Fans and readers will enjoy all of these conferences as they are always well planned, and always attended by authors and editors.... Lyle Kessler, 2450 76th Avenue, Philadelphia Pa., has published the first issue of *Fan Warp*, a mimeographed magazine. Featured are Robert Bloch, Basil Wells, David H. Keller, and others. 20¢ will get you a copy.... An excellent amateur publication (professional in content and makeup) is *Fantastic Worlds*, published by Edward W. Ludwig, 1942 Telegraph Avenue, Stockton, California. The current issue features stories by Kris Neville and Wilson Tucker, along with an excellent biographical sketch, "The Ackerman Story," by Sam Sackett. This one's well worth a quarter.... Note: We would like to be placed on the mailing lists of those fan publications we do not receive. Address them to. Robert A. Madle, 1366 E. Columbia Avenue, Philadelphia 25, Pa.

TWENTY YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION

AS ONE SURVEYED the field of science fiction in May, 1933 it appeared bleak indeed, *Astounding Stories* had, after four bi-monthly issues, ceased publication altogether with the March issue. The disappearance of Clayton Magazines took with it *Astounding's* companion magazine, *Strange Stories*. *Wonder Stories Quarterly*, after reducing its price from 50¢ and its number of pages from 144 to 96 with the Fall, 1932 issue, was discontinued with the Winter, 1933 issue. *Amazing Stories Quarterly* was now

appearing semi-annually and its demise was a foregone conclusion. The economic collapse had, indeed, taken its toll. As the science-fiction enthusiast viewed this debacle, he could not help but wonder if science fiction, as a field of magazine literature, was nothing but an idealistic experiment of Hugo Gernsback and his contemporaries—an experiment which was doomed.

Despite the apparent paucity of science fiction exactly twenty years ago, we shall have sufficient material to discuss, inasmuch as *Dynamic Science Fiction* is a bi-monthly and the May and June issues of the various publications will be considered.

The May issue of *Wonder Stories* contained the usual 96 pages, 8½" by 11". The ever-present Frank R. Paul painted the cover for Clark Ashton Smith's, "The Visitors from Mlok." The cover was not one of Paul's best, and Smith's story was only fairly good. Leslie F. Stone appeared with "Gulliver, 3000 A. D.," a so-so interplanetary yarn; John Beynon Harris (John Wyndham, as he is known today) had an interesting short anti-war story which is quite apropos today, "The Third Vibrator"; and Edmond Hamilton was represented with "The Island of Unreason," the plot of which was comparatively original at the time, but has certainly been worked over since then. Also present were Laurence Manning with the third in the "Man Who Awoke" series, "The City of Sleep," a tale of Norman Winters' awakening in 15,000 A.D., and the strange inhabitants who place themselves in permanent sleep and live the life they desire. Also in this issue was the second in the series of "The Revolt of the Scientists," "The Great Oil War," by Nathan Schachner. Technocracy was the craze in 1933, and Schachner has the scientists of the world banding together to bring about a better and more equitable social order. Both of these series were very popular at the time, and can still be reread without much difficulty. "The Moon Doom" (Part 3) by Wesley P.

Baird and "Men Without Sleep" by Edwin Bruell rounded out the issue. The former was a four-part serial, each installment after the first written by a reader. It is not remembered as a classic. "The Reader Speaks" featured D. D. Sharp, Jack Darrow, William S. Sykora, and Forrest J. Ackerman. The entire issue, a fine one indeed, was illustrated by Paul.

The May, 1933 issue of *Amazing Stories* (which contained the same number and size pages as *Wonder*) sported a symbolic cover by A. Sigmond which, in retrospect, was quite good, but which, at the time, did not appeal to the readers. Sigmond, incidentally, painted the covers for seven consecutive issues of *Amazing* (January-July 1933). These symbolic, impressionistic covers were probably the most unusual to be used by a science fiction publication. There isn't a well-remembered story in this issue: in reality, 1933 was just about the poorest in the history of *Amazing Stories*. A. Hyatt Verrill appeared with "The Death Drum," which was typical "South American Indian Verrill", but not as good as usual; Neil R. Jones "Martian and Troglodyte" is one of Jones' forgotten stories in which the Martians visit prehistoric earth; Edwin K. Sloat's interstellar short story, "The Three Suns of Ev," was fair in 1933. Other so-so shorts by P. Schuyler Miller, Jerry Benedict, and George R. Pearce were published, along with a reprint by (of all people) Edward Everett Hale, "The Good Natured Pendulum." Readers represented in "Discussions" were John W. Campbell, Jr., Clifton Amsbury who said, "The first printed issue of *Cosmology* (organ of ISA) should be out soon. There will be an article by Willy Ley in it"; John D. Clark, Julius Schwartz, and Olon F. Wiggins. Leo Morey did all of the illustrations.

Wonder Stories for June, 1933 featured an excellent lunarscene cover by Paul, illustrating "Captive of the Crater," a neat little yarn by D. D. Sharp. Gernsback, who had published

translations (usually by Fletcher Pratt) of numerous foreign scientific novels, exhumed a mediocre story from France, "The Radio Terror," by Eugene Thebault, the initial installment of which appeared in this issue. Festus Pragnell made his second appearance in *Wonder* with "Men of the Dark Comet" and Eando Binder had "Murder on the Asteroid," both of which are still quite readable. "The Final Triumph," the last of the "Revolt of the Scientists" series, by Nathan Schachner, had the Technocrats finally taking over all of industry. The fourth in "The Man Who Awoke" series, "The Individualists," told of Norman Winters' awakening in the year 20,000—and the complete anarchy he encountered. This series was the sensation of 1933, and it is remembered by oldtimers with fondness and nostalgia. Clinton Fiske brought "The Moon Doom" to its conclusion, Forrest J. Ackerman was conspicuous by his absence from "The Reader Speaks," but "good old" Jack Darrow was present. The majority of the book reviews dealt with Technocracy. Paul, of course, illustrated the entire magazine.

Amazing Stories for June utilized A. Sigmond's impressionistic talents—perhaps his best thus far—on the cover. Charles R. Tanner's "Tumithak in Shawm," one of the best stories of 1933, was featured. This was a sequel to the extremely popular "Tumithak of the Corridors," which had appeared in the January, 1932 issue. Admirers of this series had to wait until the November, 1941 issue of *Super Science Stories* to read the final story in the series, "Tumithak of the Towers of Fire." John Russel Fearn, later to become one of the mightiest of the "thought-variant" era, was represented by installment one of "The Intelligence Gigantic," his first serial. This was rather good for a 1933 *Amazing*. Bob Olson appeared with "The Crime Crusber" and Wm. Russell Moore with "Warriors of Zantos." Neither story is remembered today. An inter-

esting "Discussions" column completed the issue. As usual, Morey was the solé interior artist.

The Spring-Summer 1933 *Amazing Stories Quarterly* (144 large-size pages for 50¢) featured one of Stanton A. Coblenz's greatest satirical novels, "The Man from Tomorrow." In reality, this turned out to be the *Quarterly's* swan-song for only two more issues were to appear—and both contained nothing but reprints. Bruce and G. C. Wallis offered a fairly good inter-stellar novelette, "The Mother World." Other stories were "Celestial Pioneers," a tale of colonization of Mars, and "The Valley of the Blind," a lost tribe story, by Abner J. Gelula. The cover was painted by Sigmond, and all interiors were the work of Leo Morey.

The fan press included but one magazine, *Science Fiction Digest*—the greatest fanzine of them all! The May issue contained 18 large-size pages (printed) and featured an interview with Arthur J. Burks, Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger wrote news and gossip columns; Forrest J. Ackerman wrote about "The Scientifilms"; there were numerous departments of interest to the science fiction collector. A regular feature of SFC was "Spilling the Atoms" with Rap. You can read this column today: merely turn to any editorial in *Other Worlds*. A feature of the June issue of SFC was a short story, "Escape from Anarctica," by Ackerman; an interview with T. O'Connor Sloane; and the various column by Weisinger, Schwartz, and Rap. This issue contained the first installment of science fiction's first burlesque, "Alicia in Blunderland," by Nihil (P. Schuyler Miller). Nihil's humor appeared for many issues, and ran the gamut of the entire science fiction field. "Cosmos" was announced as starting in the July issue.

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The Verden brothers and Mary Koven stood there in a row; none of them looked very human, any more...

There was fear and bitterness, when three humans found themselves caught in an alien life-form's desperate bid for survival. But the greatest fear was of what other humans would do...

DOUBLE IDENTITY

Feature Novelet

by Raymond Z. Gallun



COME HELL and high water, the Verden brothers still had to drive into the village some time for supplies. It was in Kline's Grocery that Link Pelhof spotted Cliff Verden. Link was big and mean and dumb; and he had a pathological hatred for anything out of the ordinary. "What's the matter with your face?" he growled at Cliff.

Cliff Verden gulped in honest fear. So the trouble was beginning to show—even through flesh-colored cosmetic paint. "Eczema," he said.

"Eczema don't look like that, Dopey," Pelhof growled back.

"Okay—call it what you want," Cliff snapped at the bigger youth sarcastically. "So I got leprosy."

In his heart he wished mightily that his, and his brother Jack's trouble was something simple and fairly familiar, like leprosy.

Cliff got out to his jalopy with his bags of stuff as fast as he could, with-

out drawing more unwelcome attention. He didn't have to tell his brother about the stares he'd got in Kline's. Jack started driving as if they were a couple of bank-robbers making a get-away.

"So folks are smellin' a rat," Jack snapped. "We can't make as if everything's normal much longer, Cliff."

"Guess not, Jack. But I still look more or less like me, don't I? Except for the thickening skin, which don't hurt, and which ain't disease. And the fuzz..."

"Sure you do, Cliff. Me, too, I guess, eh? Hell, though, I'm scared of looking at myself in mirrors. Got to get over that... Cliff, you know what? I'm glad it's both of us. If it was just me alone, without any companionship, you could shoot me for a maniac."

"Bum!" Cliff snapped, almost grinning. "What a load that would be off my chest if it was only you! But it ain't just us, even. How about Mary Koven? She was out in the marsh, meteorite-hunting with us, that Saturday afternoon. Just six weeks and five days ago. What'll her folks think when they find out what's happening to her—and to us? Poor Mary! Poor me and you!..."

Cliff Verden was in love with pretty Mary Koven. At least she *had* been pretty—pale hair, blue eyes, a swell smile.

"Listen, Cliff," Jack urged again. "We've got to tell Doc Heyward..."

"That horse-quack? Nuts! If anybody told him what was the matter with us—and if he believed it—he'd drop dead from fright. We know ten times the science he does; and about this particular thing, I'll bet we know as much as the best big shot professors would ever find out—almost!..."

The two Verdens conversed in the slang of their region, as they drove on home, across the dreary, lonely countryside, that could have hidden many a mystery. They were a pair of young farm boys—orphans—and the tinkery kind, the reclusive kind. Maybe like the Wright Brothers. Their inaccurate grammar didn't match the magazines and the scientific reports they were accustomed to read—stuff that tried to keep pace with new developments toward a great dream, which was now just short of having been realized: Space travel. Journeys to other worlds.

Almost every day the newspapers told something new: "*White Sands probe-rocket ascends five thousand miles...*" Or: "*Franklin Cramm's specialists develop improved hydrogen-to-helium reaction-motor...*" Or: "*Cramm's unmanned space-ship circles moon. Photographs of hidden lunar hemisphere, brought back to Earth by robot craft, kept secret. Cramm silent but jubilant...*"

Yes, that last item brought things up to date—as of yesterday's paper. It was the saga of young Frankie Cramm, heir to a food-products fortune. The fair-haired boy who gave up tennis, polo, and big-game hunting, for a larger sport...

"Cramm rhymes with damn," Jack Verden growled. "Still, maybe we ought to send him a telegram, or write him a letter. What is happening to us and to Mary, seems to be along his lines of



purpose, though the means is a lot different..."

Cliff scowled. There was fine fuzz on his forehead—like the beginnings of soft, grey fur. "Nuts," he said. Sometimes he wondered if his voice was really changing, too. Awful panic was rising in him; and that panic itself built more panic—because, to express it, his throat was trying to make some inhuman whine!

DESPERATION cowed him.

"Yeah—I guess we'd better write that letter to Cramm, Jack," he said thinly. "Or even try to see him. If young Cramm investigates, at least our trouble will get a lot of publicity. It won't do *us* any good—we're past being helped. I guess we should have told long ago—instead of trying to make believe nothing was changed. Because it's not just us; everybody's in danger. And the danger, itself, is full of unknowns, Jack..."

The Verden brothers arrived home; around them spread the acres where they made their living, farming. But around the big, unpainted farmhouse, were the crude, glass-roofed sheds where, formerly, they'd spent much time experimenting with nursery stock, trying to develop better fruits. That project was forgotten, now.

The inside of the house smelled as old houses smell. Jack Verden put coffee on the stove, for lunch. Cliff sat with tablet and pencil at the kitchen table, and tried writing notes for the letter to Cramm. His literary style was more elegant than his speech:

"...On Earth we think of space travel in terms of rocket ships... Seems as though some other-world science can accomplish it in another way... Biology... Something to do with basic vital force shaping—changing—the physical form of a plant or animal to

match the form of another. At least that is my guess... Because I feel some outside dominance creeping into me... Another personality... No—not human... Especially at night... I suppose that's natural... Because one's ego goes to sleep, relaxes control over one's body—and somehow seems to wander to alien places itself...

"But to get down to facts... On the evening of September 18th, last, we saw a small meteor fall. Its light was red—showing that it was comparatively cool, and hence slow. It seemed to land in a marsh, nearby... So, the next day three of us went to look for it. It wasn't a meteor... Yes—we found it. In a little crater. Smashed. A mass of hooks and metal foil on its nose, kept it from burying itself deep in the ground... It was metal, all crumpled up. We made the mistake of touching it—of trying to lift it. It was very heavy. We didn't notice the tingling in our fingers till later. Some force came out of that metal, and into us. That the thing was broken didn't kill that force. We left the thing there... Weeks later we came back, after we knew that we were somehow changing. Life in the marsh was changing, too. We buried that lump of metal, thinking that it would help. It had been, I think, something atomically propelled. A cylinder, maybe two feet long.

"Now, matters are worse. I don't like to take off my clothes. I see how much I'm becoming—something else, to match some unknown pattern, slowly. The body aches, as bone-structure is altered. The shape and form of the skull—not even to mention the brain within. The shape and form of rib and leg-bones... And I wish I were skillful enough to make microscope slides of the flesh of my hands, to see how cell-structure must be changing... I suppose it's all reasonable enough, biologically. A familiar force—if you can call it that—has been isolated and directed. The same force which molds a human baby, or a seedling plant, after the form of its ancestors. The same force which enables a salamander, losing a leg, to grow a new leg in the proper shape.

"And, likewise, my brain—our brains—must be changing, becoming adapted to another kind of identity... Sometimes it's a little like double vision—one side of which you can hardly describe. But it makes you sweat to think about it. And I know I walk in my sleep. But it's not really me. It's something else, exploring an unknown place—somewhat fearfully, I believe. In the morning I find the stove taken apart... Is it my hands that do that, or my brother's? Does it matter, since it's the same for both of us? And only the night before last, our small electric power plant, here at the farm, must have been partly dissembled. I know,

because it was rather crudely put together again.

"How long will it be before those other entities take over what used to be our human bodies, completely? And I have a feeling that our identities will be going some place, too. I seem to remember it. Murky. Nowhere for a man to be. Some disembodied pattern of ourselves is being sent somewhere, or drawn—by the cylinder we touched, and, or, by some force acting from far away. So—do you want to call what is happening space travel? The trading of forms and minds across spacial distance. Space is involved, for the place I've seen in my mind can't be on Earth."

CLIFF VERDEN threw down his pencil angrily; cold sweat streamed down his back—the droplets there finding their way past the little hills of the goosepimples that could still form in the cells of his skin that remained human. Writing the facts down in his own square hand—pointing them out to himself like that—brought him a panic the like of which no Earthly cause could have given.

Jack Verden, peering over Cliff's shoulder at the writing, was no better off. "I'll type the letter up on our old Oliver later, Cliff," he rasped. "But let's drop it for now, for Lord's sake! Let's get out of this house for a while—so we don't go nuts! Go to the Marsh again to see what's happening..."

"Yeah—let's run," Cliff growled bitterly. "Run, run, run! As if we could get away! Maybe if we don't do it now, we'll never even get a chance to finish this letter!" He paused; his ragged sigh was a little like paper tearing. "Well—okay," he said wearily. "Running at least gives the relief of an illusion that escape is possible..."

A moment later he was on the phone. "Mary, honey—how is it?" he demanded.

"Bad, Cliff," she answered, her voice somehow blurred. "The folks at least know that something is terribly wrong with me. They had Doc Heyward here. Pop doesn't want me to leave the house..."

"Lotta good that'll do, honey..."

Jack and I are going for another look at the marsh. Meet us there, if you possibly can. We three have got to stick together, for whatever happens to us..."



Within an hour the Verden brothers and Mary Koven, having crossed fields afoot from their neighboring farms, met in the dreary swamp. Cliff kissed Mary; but he hardly looked at her—what he saw was hard to take. All three stared in fascination around them. This was early November, and the scrub growths that remained normal and Earthly, were, for the most part, bare of leaves. But some of them had changed; near the place where the metal thing from across space lay buried, stems and trunks had thickened and grown weirdly gnarled. Leaves were long and darkly green. The grass had ceased to be just grass; blades had widened, and grown hard as wood, and sharp as daggers. Trees had sprouted tendrils, that coiled and uncoiled visibly, under the lowering autumn sky...

"Even in the dead of winter, with snow and ice all around, this stuff would keep actively alive," Cliff Verden growled, as if he knew. "Hardy—generates its own heat, as warm-blooded animals do. Conditioned—as to another, bleaker world."

The patch of recently fresh-turned soil, where the wreckage of the cylinder lay hidden, was now completely covered with what looked like bluish moss. Out on an open patch of water, a lumpy black thing appeared for a second, at the center of widening ripples. It uttered a noise like the croaking of a gigantic frog, grown far beyond common limits. The creature might have been a frog, recently; but frog it was no longer. It was as if the spirit of another order of biology had intruded here, to shape Earthly fauna and flora by its own pattern, and by this process, to supplant it.

CLIFF'S dread sharpened. Had he come here only to be more sure of horror? Maybe the additional strain of it made his mind waver—made that sense of double-identity clearer again. He seemed to remember a tremendous pit, where cold vapors coiled. From the one viewpoint in him, that pit was terror that promised to engulf him; yet from the other viewpoint, it was a refuge that must be left behind, because this eerie Earth—this place of danger to home—must be learned about, and dealt with, if possible. Earth, it was called—a strange grunt of a name. A planet of hideous, ambitious life.

Cliff stared at Jack's sweating face, and knew that Jack, too, was experiencing the same kind of phantasm. As for Mary, with her eyes shining huge with fear from above cheeks that were now rough and fuzzy, even under the heavy makeup she wore as a mask—well, could it be any different with her? Cliff put his arm around her protectingly.

"The string holding us to all we know will snap any time, now," Jack grated. "I'll bet we don't even make it back to the house..."

It was then that three figures appeared suddenly from behind a nearby clump of scrub pines. Men. To Cliff Verden there was a shock in this development—an embarrassment, a guilt, as if at having been caught doing things which can never be approved.

"What's goin' on here? What have you Verdens been up to? And what's happened to my Mary? You told Link Pelhof that you had leprosy, Cliff! By God!—you'd better not kid about things like that, Mister!..."

They stood in a row—big, stupid Link Pelhof; little, naive Doc Hey-

ward; and massive Jake Koven in his checked blazer. He was Mary's father. The grey stubble on Jake's rocky chin, seemed to bristle far more than usual, and his knotty hands held a deer-rifle at ready. Cliff got the impression that Jake and his two companions were like a pack of Missouri hound dogs, bristling before a quarry as nameless to them, say, as a Bengal tiger loose in the woods.

Fear was their main emotion. Fear of the unknown, the extra-ordinary. It had been in Jake's trembling furious words. Yes, fear became fury by progression; it was buttressed by hate and prejudice against things far beyond understanding. And there it was transmuted into an animal urge to pounce, to strike, to bite and tear and kill, until a feeling of security was regained.

Cliff Verden's heart was in his throat. He and his companions were cornered quarry; he wanted to run, escape, avoid explanations that must make them all outcasts, fit only to be destroyed. But then his brother gave an inarticulate exclamation, and Mary, beside them, uttered a cornered cry which entirely normal human vocal cords could never have duplicated. There was no denying the alien timbre of that cry; there was no lie that could allay suspicion as to its meaning. Defiance was all that was left to use.

"Okay," Cliff snarled. "Put down that rifle, Jake—you damn fool! You got us treed; well, we ain't possums! You want to know the truth about what's happened to us, eh? You're scared that your regular lives are being upset! Well—you're right! Glory, how right you are! So—find out the facts for yourselves! Dig—there! But don't touch what you find! Then, even if you don't half understand what everything means, get in touch with Frankie Cramm! Do you hear what I say? Get in touch with him! Call it a matter of life and death—or whatever you like. He may be a stuffed shirt and a featherbrain; I don't know. But he's got experts behind him. Dough.

The advantage of being known everywhere. So—that's all I've got to say. Goodbye!—"

Clutching Mary Koven between them, the two Verdens ran across the soggy ground toward the nearby woods, taking advantage of the befuddled surprise on the part of Jake Koven, Doc Heyward, and Link Pelhof, with whom they knew there could be no compromise, and no real cooperation. Not any more so than between rabbit and wolf. And the question was; which was which? But this was more than the flight of terrified humans that have become outcasts; it was also the flight of alien entities, lost and harried on a strange planet.

For the duality—the double-viewpoint—was still more marked and frightening, now, in the retreating trio. They knew that by now they were not more than half Earthly; other minds than their own looked out of their eyes, and drove their hurrying feet, fearing the abhorrence of the Earthly strangeness all around, yet defiant.

They stumbled on, deep into the forest.



WHEN THEY stopped at last, Jack Verden said drunkenly, blurredly, between gasps for breath: "We don't live in our house any more; we hide in the woods. We try to keep safe, try to learn about our strange environment. Our names ain't our own anymore. Mine is—"

Jack uttered an eerie, long drawn trill. A night-bird might have made it—not a man. Yet it was a name. In a terrestrial alphabet it could be represented dimly: "Whr-r-r-r-a-ah-hh..."

Jack Verden, himself looked startled at the sound which had come so easily from his own throat. Then, as realiza-

tion clicked in the still-human part of his brain, his roughened cheeks blanched, and he stood there under a tree, quivering and speechless.

Mary Koven glanced upward; then, with her arms held in a gesture of protection over her head, she crowded against Cliff's chest, and seemed to huddle away from the patch of murky sky. Now, for this brief moment, her sobs were completely those of an Earth-girl.

"Cliff," she choked. "You get to be afraid of the sky! Of what might be looking at you from out there where the stars and moon and planets are! Of what might come down from out there! The sky used to be safe! Certain things were impossible. But now that's not so, any more! We're caught, Cliff! By the moon-people, aren't they? Glory—it's the age we live in that's to blame. Nineteen-fifty-six. Rocket experiments... Trips to other worlds about to happen! Contact with Lord knows what, already made... Oh, Cliff—how can anybody learn to stand it?..."

He patted her shoulder. By a gigantic effort of will, he forced vagaries, that tried to congeal into reality, out of his consciousness—a vast, pit-like valley; the idea of having a barrel chest and great eyes that could see the rich colors of ultra-violet and infrared; and a thousand thoughts that were not his own. He, too, for the moment, became almost completely Earthly, again.

His consciousness remained dream-like. Still, what Mary had just said started in him a flow of lucid understanding that explained present days in the light of history, giving them a very special place. He began to speak, slowly, and almost without slang, as if he read italicized words from a book. But perhaps it was only his own good sense talking: "Sure, Mary... For billions of years, since it was created, the Earth has been completely separate from other worlds. But now is the time when

human science has advanced just far enough to end that isolation—destroy that encasing chrysalis.

"These are the most terrible, crucial days, full of wonder and dread and danger, and a million questions. Worst and most wonderful is that man faces a complete unknown, full of fascination, curiosity, dread, mistrust, yet hope of harmony. Maybe he dreams of friends on other planets—but he doesn't know that they are there, or that he can even think very much like them. If there are enemies, they are of the worst kind—those who are hidden by the fact that even their existence can be in doubt—while their forms, their powers, their probable means of attack, are completely unguessable... It's true that the three of us now know something about what we're up against—but does it help us much? And how green were we a few weeks ago—when it might have mattered? And how green, still, is the rest of the human race?

"Yep, these are the days of crossing a line, that something in our slow, primitive instinct for naturalness still calls impossible, dreads, revolts against, refuses to accept—though our intellects know that traffic between planets can be real. The refusal goes back to the fact that, through ages of conditioning, down to our beginnings as amoebae, the sky was always an impassable limit. Everything beyond it was a sort of dream—an ungraspable strangeness. It still is—at least partly.

"So here we are, poised on the brink of one of the most significant incidents of human history—contact across the line. And things look bad. We're elected for an honor... But can man ever really bridge the gulf of difference? Talk about tact, understanding—we'll need it, now! We can't hold on as we are, much longer. Easy, Mary..."

CLIFF VERDEN'S voice died away. He clung to Mary Koven as if his arms could shelter her, somehow. She almost managed to smile. Cliff's gaze



wandered to his brother's still, pasty face. But Jack, too, had found some courage.

"So are the moon-people scared," he rasped. "Long ago they knew that the Earth was inhabited—by observing with telescopes, or something. We're as weird to them as they are to us. There are just a few hundred of them left. But they can guess that we number billions, by the way cities and stuff can be seen from the moon. They're afraid we'll come and overwhelm them. Sending scouts to Earth was to try to know better what they're up against—and maybe how to fight back..."

Cliff understood how his brother knew all this, for it was the same with himself. That duality was the answer—that rapport of minds that had to happen when an alien life-force had half succeeded in usurping a human body, changing it to match an intruding ego.

From far off through the woods, Cliff heard the rough shouts of men. He thought he recognized Link Pelhof's heavy voice, turned gruffer with fear, and the excitement of the chase. But distance blurred the words. Now there came the frantic baying of hounds. Could they be half as frantic if they scented mere wolf in country that had been free of wolves for a lifetime?

Cliff half wished for human rescue, if it was possible—which it was not. But the puckering of his hide was not just the effect of an invading thought, and the desire of another frightened being to escape being destroyed. For he, as a man, was also the quarry; he was linked with circumstances too different for those pursuers to trust. Their brutality was terror.

The familiar wood was becoming dreamlike around Cliff. Yet one

thought was clear: *Get to the brook. Wade downstream. Throw the dogs off the scent.*

His arms still sheltered Mary. But as the scene shifted with the shifting of his ego to a far place that had been dim in his mind before, she vanished from his grasp. There was no way to prevent that shifting. It was as certain as death; it engulfed him like quicksand. As it must be engulfing his brother, and Mary.

Then all philosophy, all determination to be courageous and cool, seemed without meaning; he was—*there*. Utter strangeness was as substantially real as the woods had been, minutes ago. He was prone. Stout metal bands confined him; crystal things gleamed near him. Apparatus. And the walls and roof, too, were crystal. He saw shifting colors that he had not had the eyes to see, as a man. There were layers of cold fog beyond the walls, and sluggishly writhing vegetation. Far off, yet titanically towering, was the mountain barrier—the sides of the Pit. His mind translated other measurements. Two hundred and fifty miles across, the Pit was, and a hundred deep—at the center of the moon's hidden hemisphere. The vast dimple produced when the Earth's tidal attraction had pulled the lunar bulk out of shape. A vast cup to hold the moon's only air and water. An island for bizarre life, amid stark desolation.

Just knowing that he was really here, was a jolting shock to Cliff. Then he heard a twitter from beside him, saw great eyes with slitted pupils staring down at him. How could he know, and how could it matter, whether that stare was benign or hateful? Cold rough paws touched him. Shackled in a cave full of snakes, his terror could not have been as great. Cliff's shrieks were not his own; he heard and felt the dry rustle of his great lungs, sucking in air too thin for human breathing. He saw the great, furry chest of the body that he now inhabited. Metal fabric clothed it, partly. His shrieking became a bab-

ble. He remembered that Mary and his brother must be in similar circumstances. Even his entrails seemed to writhe, but only for a moment. He was fairly rugged; but consciousness just faded away. Perhaps he had fainted.

HE KNEW no more, perhaps for days. The biological exchange of identities proved to be not yet quite complete; for he regained a dim awareness in his familiar woods. A light snow had fallen, but the body that had once been fully his, was by now too changed—its flesh too full of cells enured to harder conditions—for him to feel the cold. Crouching with him were the things that had been Jack and Mary.

Passively, as if they belonged to someone else, he watched the paws that had been his hands, arrange fine copper wire around a bit of metal, intricately cut from an ordinary tin can. His attention and curiosity were both dull, as if his emotions were still asleep.

But he felt the borrowed regret that it had not been possible to bring tools to Earth, by the method of transportation used—for tools were not alive. And other means—small rocket—had not been arranged for, because of the difficulties of damage by impact, and of finding such a missile after it had landed. It had been necessary to steal unfamiliar Earthly tools, and such materials as could be found. . . . Cliff had the borrowed memory of invading his own house at night, like a prowler. The tin-shears, screw-driver, pliers, and hammer, on the snowy ground now before his vision, were his. It was a weapon that his paws were trying to make—something for defense in danger.

Again he heard the ominous yelping of hounds. Then, like vapor, with no accompaniment of violent emotion—or like a dying dream—the view dissolved. Perhaps he slept.



The next Cliff knew, an indefinite time later, was that he was back in—hell. Except for a soft artificial glow near at hand, darkness was all around; above, through crystal, icy stars blazed. This was the long lunar night.

His great ears picked up wild babbling and screaming from close by. Those ears themselves must have changed and intensified his perception of sounds. But certainly the voices must be altered and unrecognizable, too. They sounded like those of parrots gone mad.

"Cliff! . . . Cliff! . . . Where are you, Cliff! . . ."

The timbre was unhuman, but the pronunciation was curiously accurate. It was as if alien vocal organs, here in the Pit, had a skill at mimicry far beyond that of men, and probably far beyond that of most of the intelligent beings—varying evolutionary forces denied that they would ever be human—that might, or might not, exist on other still mysterious spheres.

The first voice died away as if strangled; but perhaps it had been silenced only by the unconsciousness produced by shock and fear.

But a second voice yammered on: "Da m n it—oh—damn! Cliff! . . . Mary! . . . Oh—gosh! If I woke up and found myself turned into a toad, it would be better. . . ."

The words identified the raving as Jack's, though the voice was not Jack's, as it had been. Now, understandable speech gave way to babbling and yells, once more. But could loss of courage, here, when one's form was not even *like* one's own, be sneered at?

CLIFF VERDEN joined in the yelling. He knew that the voice that had blanked out had been Mary's. In

parrot-like tones he shrilled her name, and Jack's name. He writhed and struggled against the bands that held him hopelessly pinioned. Near him, prone and restrained like himself, he saw two barrel-chested, furry figures that he must have missed before. One was still; the other battled uselessly for freedom, as he, himself battled. Again Cliff heard his name called, and he looked into great eyes that now must be his brother's. Beneath them he saw white hair in wide-flaring nostrils. The face, if such it could be called, was pinched and small.

The Verdens engaged in no conversation that Cliff could have remembered later; their comments consisted of nothing but raving and curses. They struggled their way to the oblivion of exhaustion, but perhaps Cliff's reaction to strangeness was a little less wild than it had been during his first awareness of being here. Perhaps a dim inkling—born of basic courage—that circumstances might be endurable in this place, came to him, creating a thread of hope.

Before he blanked out, Cliff Verden again noticed the thing crouching in a corner. It was shaggier, more barrel-chested, more grotesque from an Earthly viewpoint, than even he and his brother had become. It did not move to touch them now; it only twittered faintly. Was the gleam in its huge intelligent orbs one of suspicious malice for all that was strange to it? Cliff wondered if such emotions were too terrestrial for a creature so different. But then, of course, suspicion was bound to the ancient law of self-preservation—which, because of the savage competitiveness of all life, must be universal.

Anyway, the glare Cliff gave back just then, was charged with hate for harm done him; for his helpless anguish; for all the eeriness that was around him. Hate... Again he seemed to cease being.

What bits of awareness he experienced, for a long time after that, were like scattered and disjointed fragments

of nightmares. Sometimes he was here—perhaps being studied like an insect. But just as often, his vision and his hearing were back on Earth, with his usurped body, fleeing death with the company of two other shaggy forms. Once, near the end, on a wintery afternoon, when the sunshine made blue shadows on the snow in the woods, he heard the voices of many men from not far off.

One voice he recognized—Doc Heyward's; explaining: "Link and I dug the cylinder up. I didn't touch it, except with the shovel. Link did—with his hands. Later we burned the metal thoroughly with an acetylene torch, to kill whatever dangerous force was in it. Sorry, Mr. Cramm—it was necessary, though the thing would be interesting... How do we know, even now, that *they* won't send another? Or many? Or that they can't do to all of us what they did to the Verden brothers, and the daughter of Jake Koven, here?..."

Doc Heyward's excited tones could carry far, through the clear brittle air. So they'd really managed to call Frankie Cramm in on this nameless trans-special threat and mystery! Cliff Verden felt a little relief, in spite of a distaste for the smooth adventurer.

He heard Cramm answer—with cocky sharpness: "Too bad, Friend. Should have wired me, first. Now we've lost important data. But never mind—I'll handle matters! Maybe we can take those creatures alive. That'll be swell!"..."

Cliff missed what followed immediately, as his mind blurred again. But later—not much later—he was in on the finale. His viewpoint was that of the hunted, shambling along before the long line of men that pushed their way abreast through the woods, while hounds yammered madly, and moonlight was white on the snow. There was no escape; no cleverness would work anymore, now. The enemy might fight; but the end of the rope had been reached.

And Cliff found himself not altogether glad, in spite of a threat to all people on Earth—one worse than that of lycanthropy. In spite of the stealing of his own form. For there were balancing forces and reasons; he was living the part of the quarry. Cliff knew that they had come to Earth because of fear and desire for defense and not for conquest—remembering this, now.

Yet, being a man, he understood, too, what drove the hunters on so savagely. As a small boy he had lain abed on winter nights, listening to the howling of dogs in these same woods. Wolves were then the palest of his imaginings. The cold chills along one's spine, only tried to measure the extent of un-named danger lurking in the darkness and the snow.



THE CLOSING-IN of the men was swift. They were dark shapes among the trees. The forms of Cliff's companions were grotesque blobs that kept in the shadows. Cliff was suddenly aware of the apparatus in his paws: Tin and wire and bits of glass; a weapon, improvised. It was not his own will that controlled those paws any more; but perhaps a little of his own wishes went with their movement, as they raised that crudely-made arm...

Link Pelhof snarled at him, showing his teeth: "I still know yuh by what's left of your clothes, Cliff Verden! If you are Cliff Verden at all, now! Damn yuh—maybe I'm goin' the same way—but it's your fault! Your fault, I say! But now you'll die! Die!..."

Pelhof's words were shrieks of rage, and fear, and unreason. He was a stupid lug, unable now to take the responsibility for his own past unwari-

ness even after he had been warned.

Jake Koven's attitude was scarcely any better; his eyes glowed mad in the moonlight. There were honest tears in them—for Mary. But his grief and rage and terror, and will to destroy, remained speechless. Little Doc Heyward glared with silent fury.

But Frankie Cramm drew Cliff's greatest notice. He was big, blond, and handsome; his hunter's costume was melodramatically slick. There was no question about his courage. He spoke now, and that was where the rub came; his diplomacy was of the crudest. He was one of those who call themselves sportsmen—but how often is that name a mere cloak of dignity and self-flattery for sadism?

"Easy," he crooned. "Easy, you damned things. Be good, and we won't hurt you! We know where you came from. My robot rocket, circling the moon, brought back pictures of the valley. Easy... Easy..."

His tone dripped honey and insincerity; his eyes glowed like savage coals. His honest excuse, of course, was that he was afraid, and in deadly danger. But now, in this historic moment—this first meeting of the beings of two worlds, heretofore utterly separate and hidden from each other through all their ages of evolution—could any excuse at all be accepted? *For this was the beginning of all interworld contact and traffic—not only for the moment but for the future. The implications of this moment were too gigantic; the question of harmony or chaos, for ages to come, were balanced in it.* In a larger sense, not just Earth and moon were involved; human dealings with the unknowns of Mars and Venus—and who could tell knew what other places were involved as well. Perhaps the problem of defeating chaos was beyond human powers; perhaps it called for the skill of a superman. Maybe harmony was impossible.

WITH THE pucker of dread tightening the throat that had been

his, the eyes through which Cliff Verden saw glared at Frankie Cramm. Cliff's private feeling was less contempt than regret. Here was the man who probably would be the Columbus of space-travel; he had the means, the leisure, the dare-devil nerve. But on the basis of getting along with unknown entities—the most important point of all—he was utterly inadequate. Crude, clumsy thoughtless, egocentric. A fool. *But the worst of it all lay in the doubt whether any other Earthman would be much better.*

Did the doubt presage general failure here? Even more on other worlds than the moon? Did it presage not only the futility of the great dream of interplanetary contact—of widened culture and horizons—but grotesque doom as well? Future war of the planets, fought with Lord knew what terrible weapons?

Cliff Verden thought of one other thing: the asteroid belt; the fragments of an exploded planet, theory once claimed. Correct or not, could this be taken as a symbol of inter-world traffic ending in conflict that actually destroyed one of the contesting spheres?

Cliff saw the weapon, in the paw that should have been his hand, lift farther, as if to aim. Perhaps this menacing gesture was a glaring error on the lunar side of a difference.

"Get 'em!" Frankie Cramm snapped.

Into the sharp scrape of his order blended old Jake Koven's anguished yell: "Not—what used to be—my Mary!..." Jake rushed forward, but his words ended in a gasp, as he ran right into a Winchester bullet that tore open his skull...

Many men fired together. For two

seconds the winter woods echoed with the crash and snarl of slugs. Cliff Verden felt the body of his present viewpoint falling. His consciousness grew vague, but the picture of what was happening remained starkly vivid. The paw holding the weapon of tin and wire and glass, moved and tightened. The intended target was Cramm; but the aim of a dying mind can easily be poor; the blue flash—probably atomic heat—missed its objective and tore off Link Pelhof's head and shoulders.

This was an insignificant part of action which lasted but a few seconds more. In the air, mingling with the smell of burnt cordite, there was now the sharp tang of ozone. The dogs, awed almost to silence a moment ago, now went mad with yammering, and rushed forward in a savage wave. Cliff Verden still saw the flash of their fangs, and the hair bristling along their backs. The shouting of the men was of the same quality as the cries of the hounds. Fear and fury went together.

Then silence closed in, but Cliff no longer knew. Three alien forms lay in the trampled snow. The bodies still wore tattered Earthly clothes, from which peeped fur that the nightwind rumbled. Their great eyes stared balefully at the moon. Even in death it seemed that they were dangerous. They were children of the unknown; where their powers began or ended, one could not tell. For had they not been men, once; and had not flesh and mind changed slowly, until they were different? It was space travel by some warping of biological law. There was no way to know the truth—now that they were forever dead.

The dogs whined and sniffed, as if puzzled and frustrated, now that the enemy moved no more. The men heaved uneasy sighs of relief at victory that meant uncertain peace of mind.

"Well—that's that!" Cramm growled grimly, as if to convince himself of a success, which somehow, too, in the



depths of his mind, was a defeat—a serious one. He felt sheepish.

But then his cockiness came back. "Got to finish building my two space-ships as fast as I can," he said. . .

CLIFF VERDEN had no consciousness at all at that time; and it was the same with his brother, and Mary Koven. Nor was there any definite, clear moment of awakening, for any of them. Perhaps they remained completely unaware, for days. Their emergence was like the emergence of the very sick from delirium—slow and mottled and confused, with blackness often closing in over their minds again.

But they were always in the moon valley, now; little by little the horror of their circumstances grew less, as they adjusted.

Once Mary said, in a birdlike voice: "We have just these lunar bodies, now. I saw the others die; I saw my dad die. . . You're here, too, aren't you, Cliff and Jack? . . ."

Thus conversation, and understanding of their position, began.

At an indefinite time later, during an interval of mutual wakefulness, Mary remarked: "We haven't been harmed, here. . . But that doesn't mean that they're our friends; they want to study us—T'chack and the others."

She said "T'chack" not as a human being would pronounce the name, but in its correct manner—more as a bird or squirrel chatters. T'Chack was their guard, and doubtless a great scientist. The three from Earth, all had their clouded memories of him, his great eyes glowing from shagginess. He was grotesque, and yet, when you were used to his appearance, somehow graceful. Faintly feline—though he did not resemble a cat. The times he had bent over them, touching them with cold paws, as a mother might caress her infant—or as a spider might turn a fly's head daintily in its mandibles. The times that he had applied



strange instruments to their heads, or put sweetish, jelly-like foods into their mouths, as they lay clamped helpless to glassy slabs. The twittering sounds he made.

"He'll probably kill us when he gets around to it," Jack commented once, more calmly than usual. "But so what? We've seen everything."

"Maybe he won't kill us," Mary murmured. "Sometimes I know what he says; some lunarian words were left in our minds when we made the change. 'Tutoo' means something like 'good'. 'Luleel' is 'fear'. And he picked up our names, and a few English words—maybe from our raving, or by instruments, from our brains."

Mary's companions knew: their experience matched hers. Cliff thought how brave she was, to seem so hopeful. Especially hard on a pretty girl, this change of forms must be. But deep down she was Mary more than ever, and he loved her.

"T'chack!" she called at last. "Good morning!"

The lunarian, who was busy, then, with a conical apparatus of crystal and metal nearby hardly moved. It was hard to fathom by what dark channels of reason he was prompted to reply in chirping English; "My name is T'chack; my name is T'chack; my name is T'chack." He was undoubtedly brilliant; yet, though these Earthians had crossed the path of lunar thought intimately, much of it was still an enigma. Part of T'chack's brain seemed to function like a phonograph record.

"We know a lot more about the moon people than just words of their language," Cliff said. "More than that was left in our minds by the

change..." Jack and Mary knew that this was so.

IT WAS DAWN on the hidden hemisphere of the moon, just then. Through the crystal sides and top of the building in which they were imprisoned, the Earthlings could look all around them. High up on the western wall of the valley, vast mirrors caught the first rays of the sun, and reflected them down on mists turned frigid during a night half a month long. Weird growths began to writhe contentedly in the warmth; ice would soon melt in irrigation ditches crisscrossing cultivated ground. There were scattered buildings, all obviously very old. And many a roof and eerie stone tower had fallen down.

"When you can relax, the scene can be beautiful here," Mary mused. "But it would be sad, even if we didn't know the history..."

Like babies only recently born, examining the wonders of life with their eyes, the Earthlings kept looking here and there; and history came to the fore in their thoughts. No other part of the moon had ever been habitable—only this two-hundred-and-fifty mile valley. The lunar race, incalculably older than man, was dying. Even in this pit-like valley, the atmosphere was vanishing. The last water was sinking to the now almost-cold heart of the moon. Advanced science does not admit that a world can age beyond being kept habitable artificially. But science can forget the forces of weariness and fear.

"There are just about three hundred lunarians left," Cliff said. "They've been scared of Earth for a long time, knowing that we've been getting smarter—knowing that none of their weapons would be any good against our numbers"

"Hey—are you goin' soft, Cliff?" Jack Verden demanded. "Take it easy—brother!"

Cliff Verden considered. Beyond the crystal walls of the building, looking in, were several moon-people, shaggy,

forlorn, big-eyed, clad in what looked like coarse-knitted metal fabric. Cliff remembered that he was clamped down helplessly, and remembered all the terrible things that had happened to Mary, Jack, and himself—by lunarian action.

"Perhaps you're right, Jack," he answered. "But we got little to lose, ourselves, by thinking with generosity—or not. And thinkin' like that keeps a guy optimistic. It's nice to know, in a way, that there are only a few lunarians; makes 'em a lot less dangerous. But another thing reassures me more. Our present bodies belonged to real moon-people, once; but they're a lot more human now than T'chack's body, and seem to be getting more so all the time. It's the same, in an opposite way, to what happened to our own forms on Earth; you guess where the process ends. It's growth and change under a pattern contained in a controlled life-force. A man to a lunarian, or vice versa—body and brain, cell by cell. Until an ego can feel fully at home in its new and altered habitation. Maybe the force is the thing behind the genes that shape all living things at their beginnings. Who knows? Well, T'chack does. Anyway, the process is still goin on in us. You can feel the aches of it..."

"Oh," Jack commented, his tone half dry, and half hopeful. "You mean we might be almost human again."

"Maybe," Cliff Verden answered at last. "That's optimism. But by being optimistic I was leading up to the question of what happens when what the lunarians are afraid of takes place—when Earthmen get here, at last. When Mr. Franklin Cramm gets here with his rockets and men. Which won't be long."

CLIFF PAUSED, then continued raggedly: "Forget the lunarians; leave sympathy at home with the human race. Even so, when we were kids, Jack, we used to imagine us

Earthians making friends across space... Well, we saw what happened, didn't we, when unknown meets unknown? Fear, fury, hate and murder! So, is space travel just no good for all time? Oh, don't blame it all on human nature; moon-people will kill, too. One time, they could win—on home ground. Then, on Earth, somebody'd get sore; then, when the rockets came in force—goodbye. Juggernaut."

"I'm cryin'," Jack commented dryly. "Hooray for those rocket-ships, and the men to set us poor prisoners free."

"If they happened to recognize us as men," Cliff retorted. "Which they are liable not to—right now. So, what we need the optimism for is the one chance of being buffers between two letters X—for unknown and terrible. Nice job for the devil. Let's not waste time..."

"We start by talking to T'chack," Marv said.

"Sure," Cliff answered. "Hey, T'chack! Let us loose. Dammit—don't be a dope! Get this hardware off. You're scared; bet you know what an H-bomb can do. Yeah—all of a sudden we're hopeful enough to want to keep on living, ourselves. Maybe we can help you make things all right!..."

The lunarian turned, and approached, with incredible liteness. Momentarily Cliff Verden's hope held. He had adjusted enough, now, to complete strangeness, to feel an inkling of its charm. An old dream of his brightened in his mind: (Part of it was fulfilled already, in this eerily-beautiful lunar valley.) To go far with the space fleets. Mars, Venus, Mercury. To make interplanetary contacts a success. To live the high romance of infinite frontiers.

But inevitable suspicion won a delay—against time to plan and prepare. The abhorrently graceful T'chack twittered one English word: "Dope." A paw pressed some control; Mary Koven and the Verden brothers, lost consciousness.



AT THEIR next awakening, the Earthlings repeated their pleas, arguing endlessly. When the sun of the lunar noon blazed down into the valley, T'chack unclamped the metal bands that secured the prisoners. Mercy could scarcely have swayed him, and those others of his kind that he must have consulted; but desperation before danger was another thing. Still, he remained wary; a paw held a glinting weapon.

"That way!" he twittered, and the Earthlings tried legs that they had never walked on, before. They followed a path to a crystal dome. The heat of day was terrific. Tiny creatures, seen in the brilliant color of ultra-violet, skipped here and there, like grasshoppers. Great lunarian eyes of passers-by, stared inscrutably at the captives.

Cliff Verden wondered if, in the faces of Mary and Jack, he now saw a slight resemblance to their former selves. A forming of features, a smoothing of skin under fading fuzz. But he felt his own great lungs—smaller than the lunarian norm—rasping dryly as they breathed air in whose rarity an untransformed Earthman would quickly suffocate; and he wondered how he had avoided madness in the change of forms, or how he could accept it almost casually, now. But he wondered also, if it was a means to a broadened understanding—of all the strange, unknown beings in the universe.

He put an arm around Mary. Yes, she still *was* Mary; yet their present lines made even this gesture of protection, slightly grotesque and embarrassing. After a moment, he desisted.

Inside the crystal dome, which was weirdly and beautifully carven, T'chack showed the Earthians the

lunar version of a radio-receiver. It was a deceptively simple thing of crystal, shaped like a tuning-fork—with details of metal. But the fork vibrated—responding to the almost infinitely-weakened waves that managed to find their way from terrestrial stations, to this far side of the moon. The voice of the news commentator, seemed incongruous, here:



"I am grateful for airforce cooperation in granting me the rank of colonel, and full authority and assistance in tered swamp vegetation and animal life has been sampled, and transferred to biological museums. The remainder has been destroyed... On the danger side, it is known that the moon would make a fine firing-platform for action against the Earth, with guided atomic-missiles. It is hardly a comforting thought, in the light of the reported scientific powers of the moon people. As to developments in prospect, I quote from Franklin Cramm's statements:

"I am grateful for airforce cooperation in granting me the rank of colonel, and full authority and assistance in dealing promptly with deadly danger. From photographs obtained by my robot-rocket, I know where I must go. Another incident gives me an idea of the kind of devils I may expect to find. Their valley is large, but limited, and I do not believe that they can be numerous. And I go, fully equipped, and with a picked crew of airforce men. Very soon. I thank all for the great honor that has been bestowed upon me..."

"Unquote. So the matter rests for the moment. Security reasons bar re-

vealing Colonel Cramm's time of departure. But knowing his reputation, I am anticipating developments at any time. So, until five, pm..."

Martial music replaced the speaker's voice.

JACK VERDEN'S mood had changed. "It sounded like Cramm, all right," he said. Into his elin tones had crept the shadow of a bitter growl.

"Yeah," Cliff commented. "But don't cuss him too much; maybe it sounded more like anybody and everybody back home, seeing a threatening mystery from the dark side."

There was quiet, then, for a few seconds, everyone exchanging tense glances all around. Cliff wondered if T'chack's great eyes were at once doubtful and pleading. Sympathy warmed in Cliff.

His gaze wandered around the chamber, hunting a means to avert calamity, that hung over this strange beautiful valley like a malignant fate. But he mistrusted his own sympathy. Had he been so well treated here, after all? Were lunarians less blunt than terrestrians?

"But that's not it," he said aloud. "It all comes back to the same point—the getting away from the law of the jungle and of Genghis Khan for both sides, and the finding of understanding. That, past the terrible obstacle of instinctive fear of things so utterly different and separate. And to preserve, instead of destroying. To get along... There's art, science—Lord knows what all—here..."

"Right," Mary put in. "Now for a way."

Cliff looked at the things which stood on a sort of table. There were two globes—models of Earth and its satellite. There was a model of what must be a telescope. The residual memories of the lunarian that had once ruled his present body, enabled Cliff to understand what was here. The great observatory was on the Earthward face

of the moon. So was the point from which the small cylinder, that had enmeshed himself and his companions in a bizarre sequence, had been fired. Briefly he considered finding the means to go there—but he could discover no advantage in doing that.

Mary made the obvious suggestion: "If we had a radio-transmitter strong enough—we might talk to Cramm—put him straight."

At first blush, the idea looked good. Cliff turned to the creature called T'chack. "Hear that, T'chack?" he asked. Oddly, then, he found himself repeating the question in twittered syllables. With halting explanations.

"Transmitter we have," T'chack answered. "But—no good to use. 'Al-ready—they come. Too late... You not talk—to the ships..."

This did not entirely make sense, but Cliff's intuition for lunarian psychology suggested an explanation to him—the same hard barrier, built of mistrust for one whose soul was Earthly, though he might otherwise be a friend.

Laughter, bitter or otherwise, being a human reflex action, did not come naturally to Cliff's alien throat. But he did shrug. "No," he murmured, "I guess it would be too much to expect that T'chack and his people would let us do anything that might make us seem to be running things—even a little bit. Even when they're in a terrible jam. Nice— isn't it? Yeah... But, of course, we don't know that talking to Cramm would do any good, even if we had the chance. He's a bullheaded character..."

Cliff's words were mild, but defeat and frustration were in them. What was there left to do but wait, ride along, see just how the debacle happened? Like the clash of two sides, that had met once, very recently, in a winter woods at night. Dread building unreason. Dread that chilled the flesh... Cliff Verden felt the tense impotence of a swimmer being swept out to sea by the tide. Already Cramm



was in space; there was no reason to doubt T'chack's word, in this. In that airtight observatory on the other side of the moon, the watchers would know.

IT WAS Jack Verden who now showed a minor defiance to circumstance. "We might as well go for a walk, gang," he said. "Gonna try to stop us, T'chack?..."

The latter only chirped worriedly, following. The Earthlings were almost casual, outwardly. They walked by a canal; they explored ruins where weathered carvings of odd charm were overgrown with vines as mobile as sluggish snakes. They watched moon-people prepare for trouble, mounting strange, glistening weapons, and studying the sky...

And at an unexpected moment, T'chack burst into song—at least that was what it seemed to be. The trills and warbles of it were eerie and sad and beautiful.

"It makes you think of stars," Mary said. "Of distance. And maybe of the end of the universe."

Cliff agreed. But though stymied, and perhaps living his last hours—as very likely the charm of this valley was, too—he didn't stop trying to plan...

There was no reason to return to the buildings where they had been. The Earthlings ate strange, hard fruit; and when, during that week-long afternoon, they grew tired, they slept in the shadow of a wall, and in sight of the encroaching desert.

But they were awake when the high, thin scream came; and they saw the dazzling streaks of fire high in the sky, as two rocket-ships, curving around the moon, braked metric

speed. They did not come low, then. Flying like planes on short wings, high up toward the rim of that cup of air that was the valley. Ten miles up, maybe. Large though they were, they were mere silvery slivers in the sunlight.

Some lunarians nearby leaped to their weapon—a great globular knob mounted on a rod. They began a strange, soft chant, with whispers in it.

"I don't want to butt in, T'chack," Cliff Verden said. "But if you value anything at all, don't let them fire that rig. And hope that nobody fires—here, or up there... Come on—we'd better get back to the buildings..."

Cliff's spine chilled. The tension of each second was like a tight-drawn hair that might snap at any time. And was it so hard to visualize what was going on, up in those great rockets, which certainly had the most violent of hell-stuff in their bellies? Young guys, trained to hair-trigger living and duties, would be peering down with scopes, now, taking pictures, using radar—learning superficially about things that were worth lifetimes of study. Oh, they were good guys, and cool enough now—up there! They wouldn't drop anything that was like a fragment of the sun's heart—yet—not unless they were attacked, that is. But that was where the dreadful tightrope-walk toward the hope of understanding began!

Jack Verden gave his views of his and his companions' position, here in the valley. "Any time, some of the local folk are liable to jump us and commit murder," he said. "Hmm-m! We're the enemy within their gates." He glanced nervously at T'chack's slit-pupiled eyes.

AT THE place where the Earthians had first looked on the moon through lunar eyes, the four waited, and watched the circling ships. T'chack was restive and inscrutable. To avoid some of the strain of dragging hours, with which little else could

be done, Cliff Verden sporadically examined the apparatus of the life-forces that had brought him and his companions here; lunar memory enabled him to understand it a little better.

The radio, in the nearby dome, brought only music, and substantially the same newscasts as before. With nothing to be gained by listening, the Earthlings gave way to talking—to T'chack, and to other moon-people who crowded around.

"Got to bear down on the propaganda," Cliff said. "But with plenty good reason. Don't start any trouble. For Lord's sake—don't!... But to vary the routine—T'chack—ever think about crossing space? To Earth, or farther? Ever think what it would be like, if the water of this valley were replenished? If fear was over? If there were more of your people? If they could flourish again? Or don't you dream?..."

The Earthlings slept in relays—on the ground. When the sun was near setting—when the light reflected from the great mirrors high on the eastern wall of the Pit, was already dimming slightly—one of the tiny silver needles that were the space ships, that had circled steadily for so long, propelled by subdued threads of atomic fire, darted westward, out of sight.

"The beginning of action, I'll bet," Cliff breathed. "That ship will probably be landing just outside the rim of the valley—to be fairly safe, and to be held in reserve, while the other one starts things. They must have been waiting for darkness. Dammit—do the toughest parts of this deal always have to happen at night?" Something in his mind chilled and quivered.

"You're; nuts, Cliff," Jack protested. "No sensible Earth-guys would go stumbling around on the moon for the first time, in the dark!"

"Like hell they wouldn't!" Cliff answered. "Those guys are picked men Young; reckless; not scared of the devil. And they've been under training for trans-spacial stuff for a long time.

No mere physical circumstances on a world as well known as the moon is by astronomical study, would stop them. Nope, that's not their weak point. If they think there's any advantage to the dark, they'll use it. They've got careful theory and plans to follow. They've got goggles with night-lenses, for sure. And black-light equipment. And all the other latest stuff... The weak-point is elsewhere..."

Slowly the daylight died; the valley filled with deepening blackness, over which the spacial stars burned. And from high in the sky came a faint whisper. From beside Cliff, eyes glowed faintly, like cat's eyes. But it was Mary who spoke: "The ship's coming down!"

It did not use its jets; it only seemed to glide in, quietly, on its wings, guided, perhaps, by radar. It showed no lights—except a dim glow from its hot jet-nozzles—which made Jack say: "That's not a real light—to human eyes, I'll bet—but infra-red, which is heat-radiation. The dopes—they don't know that our lunar eyes can see black light naturally."

"What help is that?" Cliff retorted. "With the moon-people seeing a target—well—that only makes the danger of a shooting-match worse."

The ship landed far out across the valley in the desert. The dimmest phosphorescence of the radiation of solar heat still left in the ground, marked its location—behind a screen of surrounding hills. That much shelter had been selected for it. Otherwise, you could call its being there foolhardy, daring—which perhaps *must* take a part in a bout with the unknown, such as this.

But what of the consequences of bluff and bravado? That ship was an instrument of mankind's first brave lunge across the void; it carried a hope of good in the purpose. But certainly no cards could have been more stacked than now against such an outcome. Was it necessary, or even possible, to talk about it, with a dread-tightened throat? Cliff, Jack, and

Mary all knew what should happen.

There'd be a blue bolt from a lunarian weapon; that ship would be torn open in a radioactive blaze. Then its twin would come from wherever it had landed, beyond the valley. Revenge, in a widening flame of millions of degrees, would be blunt and swift, enveloping the whole valley... Not a victory—but a precedent of defeat for a dream...

THE SECONDS fled, and that awful glare didn't come. But that must be sheerest luck—fear for once sharpening prudence, helping, no doubt. But how long could that last? Again by luck the time extended to several minutes. By then it was not too hard to guess what might be going on out there in stygian gloom, where, through the swift loss of solar heat after sunset, there was no longer even the phosphorescence of black light, for natural lunar eyes to see, or specialized Earthly goggles to detect.

Two kinds o' ghouls might be creeping toward each other. Human and lunar. To each, the other was a horror—a thing so strange and terrible that to hate and fear and fight it seemed the only possible course to follow. Emotional dynamite? What a feeble, archaic term!

Once there was a flash—from a black light projector. A great blue spark followed it back to its source. Doubtless an Earthman died. Immediately, at a little distance, there was the sharp flare of an atomic bullet. Most likely that ended at least one moon horror. The Earthlings, too, here, had refined atomic small-arms. New and terrible.

Cliff Verden was sure, then, that all was lost; now the storm would break. But once more—like the lucky turning of a wheel of fortune—nothing followed. What had happened was like the sputtering and dying of some ignited grains at the edge of a pile of gunpowder. Aside, Cliff wondered if the sweat of tension he felt on his body could be lunarian...

Carefully he had avoided turning his back to T'chack; for one never knew what he might do, under present circumstances. Now Cliff moved closer to his brother and Mary. "Get on the other side of T'chack," he whispered, "in case I can't talk good enough to convince him. We can't just stand here; luck'll never last..."

Then he spoke to the moon-creature. "For your own good as well as everybody's, you got to let us go," he said. "To save the valley, or lives, everything. Maybe we've got a chance..."

The other lunarians had all dispersed. T'chack's lungs wheezed nervously for a moment, as if in indecision. Maybe there was a little light around the hope of understanding between worlds when he chirped, "Go..." Or maybe he was just afraid.

The Earthlings hurried, stumbling across Lizarre country where even that self-warming vegetation was going into the sleep of deep freeze in the cold murk of the night. Dimly, by the starshine, they saw long crystals of hoarfrost forming on the ground. The metal-fabric garments the three wore, generated heat. But even half-lunar skin, with its dead-air cells, was bitten by such a temperature.

"We've got to peg as many of the large weapons of the moon-people as we can," Cliff said tensely. "Especially near the ship. It's the one chance to stop hell. Then, maybe we can talk sense into Cramm."

THIS, AT least, proved easier than it seemed. In the darkness they looked like, and could sound like, moonfolk. Approaching a weapon's position, they would chirp a few syllables, allay suspicion, get close, and strike stunning blows with rocks. It was treachery for a good purpose—they hoped. There were more than two lunarians at a weapon, and passwords seemed unknown—or forgotten about—on the moon. A little action with the same rocks, disabled delicate apparatus.

Three weapons were knocked out

before they got close to the ship. But mostly they were on the way—running, leaping, stumbling—hurrying to win against time and danger. Their lungs, no longer of lunar size, gasped from the exertion. Nearing the ship, they began to circle and search the surrounding hills. Five more knob-like things they found, and put out of business, stunning the beings that manned them.

Cliff gave a low mewling call, more chilling, from an Earthly viewpoint, than a demon-cry. No lunarian voice answered it.

The Earthlings felt half frozen, but elated. "Gosh, I hardly believe it," Jack remarked. "But I guess we've done what we wanted—at least for a little while. The worst danger zone for trouble to start, is quiet."

Cliff put an arm around Mary. There was no embarrassment now, to be found in awareness of their strange forms. Together, they felt like part of the night. They were adjusting to the lunar environment. "Thanks for everything, Mary," he said.

But this lifting of their spirits was pathetically brief. For, from out of the dark, hard, metal-sheathed bodies rushed them. Their low twitters must have been heard, as well as Cliff's cry; and the night-lenses of goggles must have made the best use of the starshine, to enable the wearers to see them. It was no mild assault. The blows, countering a fear of death and horror, on the part of those who delivered them, could have killed easily.



THE NEXT thing that the Verdens and Mary Koven knew, they were dazzled by the white glare inside the ship. Clutching them were six young men in space armor.

Instruments and white walls gleamed around them. And before the captives stood Frankie Cramm himself, resplendent in a spotless coverall.

"Well," he exclaimed at last. "A new type of local native! Smaller ears and eyes. Less furry. Almost human faces... Good work, boys. Hold them easily; mustn't frighten them anymore than necessary..."

Cramm took slow steps forward. His eyes glowed at once with intense curiosity, and a savage and phony gentleness. His gaze seemed directed mostly at Cliff. "Easy, you poor things," he crooned. "Easy... Nobody's going to hurt you. As long as you know that I'm boss..."

Meanwhile, Cliff and his companions were studying the man. Cramm was a rather magnificent specimen—tall, well-formed, strong; yet Cliff changed no previous opinion of him. Here was the would-be torchbearer of something great—space pioneering. Maybe his glaring fault, and his crudity before a chosen purpose, was more than a personal trait, but was something inherent in the rough drives of Earthly life. Depth was missing in him; even his cocky self-assurance had the excuse of being a thoughtless, un-selfconscious thing. Yet he looked intelligent.

But that did not make him wise; however, it is almost impossible to be wise before the utterly unknown. There the only substitute for wisdom is humility.

Cliff Verden could judge like this now, intellectually; but his emotions could not follow. He'd been through too much, so his fury raged at the man. Still, when he spoke, he kept his voice, which was losing some of its birdlike quality, calm.

"Thanks for being so nice, Cramm," he said. "What happens next? Do we set up a military base here in the valley?"

They were simple words, but coming so simply from a furry and still

only quasi-human shape, gave them the power of black magic. Hard young faces of the men present, blanched. For a second, before he recovered himself, Cramm's eyes fairly bugged. What he said then, was such an obvious thing to say, that it was ludicrous: "You—speak—English!"

"Sure," Cliff Verden answered. "Cramm—I like the idea of rocketing to other unknown planets myself. In fact, when I was a kid in Missouri, I kind of loved the idea. Maybe I do, yet. But maybe designing and building the drive-jets that are successful, and navigating across the millions of miles, is the easiest part. Sometimes I wonder how the rest is done. Do you just barge in, against danger, and all the things that you can't possibly know beforehand, like a Nineteenth Century Admiral taking over some dumpy island in the name of his flag? It sounds screwy to me, Cramm—especially when there are—'natives.' Un-human ones, with a psychology far different from your own..."

CLIFF VERDEN felt the heavy stuffiness of the Earth air around him in the ship. Soon it might kill him and his companions; but for now he was able to talk and observe. Under the impact of a half-lunar thing speaking English with a familiar and mild sarcasm, Cramm's cheeks became whitened, and dewed with sweat.

"This is stupid," he mumbled. "Insane!..."

Jack Verden took up the argument at this point. "Sure," he said roughly. "Stupid—like the way you look, now, Frankie Boy! Insane—like the way things that happen on other worlds can seem. Okay—let's make matters easier for you: Want me to guess what your plans are? Yeah. Take over the valley; establish a base; begin running things. Like as if you knew every danger at a glance. Well, let me point out that we think we just saved your life—for a little while! And all of a sudden



I get another idea. We're good American citizens from Missouri; we got here before you did. So, if there's any taking-over to be done, don't you think we got claim-priority over you? We should have homestead rights. So maybe we should contest intrusion in the Supreme Court, eh? Or even sue you for trespassing..."

The situation was so grotesque that it was almost funny; but nobody laughed.

Stung by insult, Frankie Cramm showed anger. It helped clear some of the fuddled confusion from his mind and face. "Oh—" he growled. "I get it. That night in the woods! You're the other side of the biological exchange. Lunarians into men—here!"

It was Mary Koven who answered this time. But her words seemed to hit the same mood as those of the Verden brothers, as if they were all one: "To the head of your class, Mr. Cramm! You handled that woods incident with nice, blunt efficiency! Bridge a gulf of difference with a gun—because you're scared! Because you let your nerves get the best of you, before the unknown! Assuming that you faced an enemy, before you even took the trouble to find out! Because anything so strange *has* to be an enemy, eh?"

"And you're the man who wants to be the first to visit the planets! Oh, boy—it's pathetic! No—it's gruesome! But don't get me wrong. I don't say that any other uninformed Earthman would have done any better than you—or even as well. But the unknown, on a strange world, just can't be simple. And a mistake could be horrible, involving the whole human race..."

As she spoke, Cliff Verden watched

Mary. She was rather splendid. And, aside, he wondered if his ideas of beauty hadn't drawn something from lunar concepts. He remembered a revived movie he'd seen long ago. A woman made from a black panther; feminine beauty emerging from a sleek and dangerous ugliness, that still had always been beautiful. In Mary's still half-lunar form, did he now suddenly notice the same thing happening in her—without any abrupt physical change in the body itself?

Now Cliff's attention was drawn back to Cramm, who stood fuddled again before this last onslaught of words.

The clatter of an airlock valve jarred the spell. In a moment a young crewman in a space suit was reporting. "We have collected eight natives, all stunned, from beside their broken weapons, sir," he told Cramm. "We have them outside—shackled."

This news seemed to start Cramm's mind to working again. A light of grudging comprehension came into his eyes. "Thanks, Savrin," he growled. Then he turned back to the Verdens and Mary. "Also—*thank you!*" he grated. "For being of material assistance. But the arguments that have been brought up here, are pure, farcial nonsense! I had a job to do, and I did it the best way I knew how! I think danger is past. If they're wise, these lunar devils won't start anything. According to plan, by now our other ship has landed men with heavy weapons all around the rim of this valley, and commanding every part of it! And the ship, itself, is now patrolling overhead. And—yes—there *will* be a military base! We can't take any chances with treachery! Are you satisfied?"

CLIFF VERDEN, and his companions all felt the return of a pompous officiousness to Frankie Cramm. Cocky insistence on being always, perforce, right. Their hearts sank as they realized that Cramm had probably, by

luck, established his dominance here.

The sequel was not hard to visualize: Other tough egocentric men with imperialistic ideas would follow Cramm, here. By the science and the drives they brought, the valley might become truly verdant again. But the lunarians would either be forced into extinction, or practical slavery by the type of Earthling who never tried to understand that they, too, possessed culture, science, greatness, which they might have shared for mutual benefit, but which now might be turned by bitterness into a deadly, hidden danger.

Suddenly, in defeat, Cliff Verden wanted to hit that angry face before him. "No!" he said. "I'm *not* satisfied! We're all alive just by good fortune, which is not your fault, Cramm! This valley could be a smoking ruin—the last of a race gone, and with it a biological science that would certainly be useful in medicine on Earth—just for example!... But the moon is an easy place to grab, with only three hundred inhabitants. Look, everybody! Here's the guy who wants to go to Mars and Venus! The greenhorn! I wonder what he thinks he'll find there? And what he *will* find there? There have always been signs on Mars; it's not dead like most of the moon. And we know that, with knowledge, life can go on even after a planet dies. What kind of life? How does anybody know? But something, certainly, to be handled with care..."

Cramm's jaw was hard with rage. "I hope you've said your piece," he snapped. "Because I'm going to put all three of you outside..."

It was then that it happened. There was a faint scraping and tapping at the airlock; then a mewling cry. Crewmen opened the lock cautiously, and seized the lunarian who had entered it. T'chack. He gasped and choked in the dense Earth-air, but his glazing eyes searched quickly around



him. Maybe his motive was already revenge. He struggled. Then, with small, yellow teeth he bit the hands that held him, and lunged straight for Cramm, whom he must have sensed was the leader. Cramm's faults did not include a tendency to run away; he grappled with the lightly built monster.

The Verdens and Mary saw the tiny metal cylinder in T'chack's gloved paw. It touched Cramm's bare arm. There was even a tiny spark. Cramm recoiled slightly.

"You—learn," T'chack chirped in English. "I go—Earth. You change—lunarian..." Then he collapsed, half smothered.

But the meaning of what he had said was plain, not only to the three to whom this same thing had happened, but to Cramm as well. For on Earth he had heard how a process worked.

In that little piece of metal T'chack had concentrated a molding biological force—a driving pattern of his own shape. Now it had passed into Cramm's flesh. And into his own tissues T'chack must have let flow a similar though opposite kind of energy, to aid in the change and exchange between himself and the Earthian adventurer.

CLIFF VERDEN was almost sympathetic to Cramm's reaction to terrible knowledge; for he had been through this ordeal himself. In a matter like this, no courage was any shield from fear. To realize suddenly that you have been bitten by a cobra, can be only a feeble comparison. For here was slow, grinding horror, that

warps limbs and bone and skin and muscle to a form where one can scarcely know himself.

Cramm's jaw dropped, and his cheeks seemed to cave in. "Damn—I'll kill you!" he growled at T'chack's inert figure.

"Don't," Cliff snapped, protecting the lunarian with what was probably just a bluff—in one way or another. "He's the one that knows about this sort of thing—the only one who can turn the process back—if it can be done. Besides, what happened serves you right... Get us all out of here—outside where we can breathe—and where I can talk to T'chack..."

Under the pressure of events, Cliff and his companions had hardly realized how groggy the air in the ship was making them. But now, as they were hustled out into the stinging cold of a semi-vacuum, and shackled against the side of the ship, the blurry weakness left them. But their lungs, in chests that had grown smaller than those of the lunarians, labored heavily.

In a moment, all was quiet again. A guard in a space-suit paced back and forth, his form limned against the glittering stars. In a long row, against the flank of the ship, which, of course, was sealed and dark, were the other lunarian captives. Regaining consciousness after having been stunned, they had covered themselves with desert sand, as a protection against the cold. The Verdens and Mary—and T'chack, who had now also recovered his senses—did the same.

Now Cliff addressed T'chack, who lay between himself and Mary. "Can the process be reversed, T'chack—for Cramm?" he asked. "You know—can Earthling stay Earthling—not lunarian—after—" Cliff stopped, aiding his effort to make his question clear a moment later, with a few halting, musical syllables.

There was a long pause. Then T'chack said "Yes."

"Good," Jack commented. "We've

got Cramm in a nutcracker. We got something to sell him now, that he can't help but want—his own identity! He'll give up—come our way—running!"

Right then Cliff was sure that this was right. So his thoughts wandered. "That apparatus—T'chack," he said. "Those slabs where we were fastened down. You're not on one. Don't you have to be—to change—bodies?" Again he resorted to a few lunarian words to help out.

"Not—all—time." T'chack answered. "Not—first—part..."

Now Mary had a question, a feminine one: "T'chack," she began very slowly and carefully. "Will we—will Cliff, Jack, and I—Mary—really become Earth-people again—completely—in time? With the same—faces—that we had—on Earth?..."

Again there was an interval—an eerily tense one—before T'chack replied: "Yes—completely—almost—in time. A year—maybe. Bones—different. Many things—different. But flesh—change... Bones—change. Things—change. Faces. All..."

CLIFF VERDEN and the others felt drowsy. It was the cold that did it; they covered even their faces with sand, leaving only tiny spaces through which to breathe. It seemed that, in doing all this, they followed a lunar instinct. Their self-radiant clothing helped keep them warm in the awful chill. The sleep that was coming over them was probably like hibernation.

Cliff thought of the farm, of the green hills in the springtime. He yearned for Earth, to be back there, and to have Mary as his wife. But to retain so much of the old life was now an impulse that was obscured, too, by other yearnings. Far, far overhead, moments ago, he had glimpsed the tiny dart of radioactive fire from the jets of the circling space-ship. And now, with this memory, and with much of the tension of recent events quieting toward better solutions, his mind

soared more vividly toward a boyhood dream. High romance across the void. The unfathomed mysteries of Mars and Venus. Danger. The infinite caution and judgment needed in handling enigma—which could never be a simple thing, that could be dealt with so bluntly as a human affair.

Oh, no! . . . But didn't that, of itself, mean a more magnificent destiny, not only for mankind, but for whatever other comparable forms of life that might come within their sphere of knowledge? The lunarians were not human—yet even their shapes might be far more human than the beings that might have to be understood, farther out. After all, by some parallel of evolution, the lunarians had arms, legs—and a skeleton and flesh comparable to the human. It might not be the same, elsewhere. But now the shell of isolation of one world from all the others was breaking. It was like a strange, thrilling dawn. Adventurous. But maybe something splendid, instead of a debacle of confusion and horror. . . .

Cliff Verden's awareness slipped away from him. He awoke to noise and bustle and dazzling daylight—which of itself was a surprise, meaning that his sleep of hibernation had lasted for all of two Earth-weeks! But that was not all of the surprise.

Cliff stumbled erect out of his bed of sand. Near him were Mary and Jack. Instantly Cliff's thoughts leapt into the groove of a previous hope that had seemed almost a certainty. "Cramm—," he gasped. "What happened? Didn't he come—to ask if his body could be kept from—changing? Didn't he come—not in two weeks? . . ."

There was worry in Cliff Verden's voice, and in the faces of his companions. . . .

"We don't know—anything," Mary stammered. "Cliff—what can it ever mean? . . ."

Space-armored crewmen, who had already freed Mary and Cliff from their

shackles, were doing the same for the captive lunarians, most of whom burst from their sleep to hurry away, twittering, still gripped by horror of the strange intruders from Earth.

Cliff was about to make inquiries of one of the crewmen, when another man stepped toward him. It was Frankie Cramm. His face, inside the transparent bubble of thin plastic, that was his oxygen helmet, looked terribly haggard. And already the skin of his cheeks seemed slightly odd. And the marks of worry were deep around his eyes. He must have had some tremendous battle with himself.

Now he spoke, his voice coming, thin and muffled, through his helmet. "I heard what you just said," he growled at Cliff. "One thing you don't seem to realize is that I *really* like the idea of making a success of interplanetary contacts, too. Well—I know what you meant, when last we talked. All right, damn you—maybe I've gained some humbleness and insight since! As maybe you did, yourself, not so long ago! By the change you've been through! Well, if that kind of a change—giving two viewpoints—is the key to a better insight, I guess I can stand it, and keep my sanity, as well as you can! No—I didn't come to find out if the change could be stopped. You see, I'm not going to have it stopped!"

C RAMM'S tone was defiant, his square jaw hard. And Cliff Verden and his companions, in their surprise, realized what they had sometimes sensed before. Frankie Cramm had been crude, blundering, untaught; but under all that there had been strength, potentials, and a savage will to realize to the best of his ability, the dream that was his, too.

"Good. I admire you—honestly," Cliff said. "My apologies wherever necessary. What now?"

There still was a coldness between them.

"Whatever you advise—if I think it



reasonable, myself," Cramm answered. "No military base here, and my ships will leave as soon as possible. To show good faith. The rest—well—what do you think? We could leave certain Earthly products behind, for the lunarians to examine. Maybe, in return they would give us examples of their inventions, art-work, and so on. All right?"

"It sounds very reasonable," Cliff replied. "We'll see." But deep down he felt humble and a little errant, himself.

"Do you want to come back to Earth with us?" Cramm demanded.

Cliff Verden looked at his brother, and at Mary. It was a hard question to answer abruptly.

"Maybe we'd better stay here," Mary said. "We're not so very Earthly—yet. Though I guess we could disguise ourselves a little. But, for the time being we'd better stay—be ambassadors of good-will. Okay, boys?"

Cliff and Jack both nodded.

"Thanks," Cramm said. "Work out the details you like, and let me know." He paused for only a moment more to exchange fascinated stares with T'chack, who had stood quietly near, abhorrent and shaggy. Then Cramm turned on his heel, and reentered the ship.

"Everything's fine for your people, T'chack," Jack Verden said. "Tell 'em they can stop being afraid of Earth. Tell 'em that Earthlians are their friends... Only, I'm worried about you; maybe you want to back out from going to Earth, now that the revenge motive is gone. Maybe you won't like being half Earthling for a while."

This time T'chack grasped the general meaning of the English words without difficulty. His eyes glowed. Maybe it was the questing eagerness of the scientist. "Not—back—out," he trilled.

The four started across the valley toward the lunar buildings. During the next few hours, much happened. Young men took many pictures of lunarians and their way of life. The strange became more familiar, from two viewpoints; barter began. A cigarette lighter might be traded for a weirdly-tooled ornament of black enamel, or a bit of radiant fabric.

Among the lunarians, sullenness gave way to a strange excitement, which might mean a renaissance among them, in time to come. Did they also have a sense of wonder? Did it kindle in them a spark that might prompt them to use their science to rejuvenate and re-people their valley?

CLIFF TALKED a second time with Cramm. As a result, two young Earthmen, a physician and a biologist, decided to remain on the moon, to conduct studies. Supplies for them, and a special, airtight space-tent, were unloaded from the ship. Also, three space suits, for the time, not too far off, when Mary Koven and the Verdens, becoming more and more Earthly, could no longer breathe the thin atmosphere of the lunar valley.

Also, Mary and Cliff had a private talk. Mary answered Cliff's question with the hint of the smile that had been hers before they had ever tangled with moon-mysteries. Her brows were shaping. Her eyes were turning from yellow to blue, again. And there was short blonde hair, with a suggestion of a wave, on her head, showing amid fading alien fuzz. He thought, again of that old movie—the black panther becoming a pretty girl.

"I don't see why we should wait until we are completely human, either, Cliff," she said softly. "Or until we

go back to Earth. Will we ever be more sure? As a ship captain, Cramm has certain official powers."

And so they were married, aboard the Cramm's number one rocket.

The other space ship had landed beside its twin. After the wedding T'chack disappeared—to go lie on the same slab on which Cliff Verden had first awakened. Thus he prepared for strange adventure.

But Mary and Jack and Cliff were present to see the airlocks of the space ships sealed for the last time, before their leap back into the sky.

"Good luck. We'll see you. Thanks for everything," Cliff said to Cramm. He put his arm around Mary.

For once Cramm smiled at them. Was it mostly for his view of these still-strange figures showing affection, or for his own grim thought of how he would come back to the moon, and see them?

"Yes," he said. "And in a couple of years, maybe we'll go farther—see the

Martians wearing red neckties in the thin desert wind."

"Sure," Cliff joshed back. "I'll bet. Red neckties."

"How'll we know how to get along with them, then?"

Dread plucked at Cliff—like that of a nameless noise in a blizzard at night. In the impulse of man to cross space he saw the dangers of complete mystery. Yet he felt a vast eagerness—and the belief that, in Franklin Cramm, human chances for great achievement were as good as they could be.

"Seach me," Cliff said. His tone expressed caution, shrewdness, a willingness to be flexible, and a humble wonder before the universe.

"Yeah," Cramm grunted, staring out across that beautiful eerie valley on the far side of the moon. And far beyond it. "I guess that that's the only answer."



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"The natives were quite impressed when I cut down trees with one stroke of my axe..."

THE LINER dropped like thistledown into its cradle at Elium, capital of the Outer Galactic Federation. In the main cabin, passengers of all shapes, sizes and types of metabolism filed by the black-light inspec. Just once it squalled "Something to Declare" as a wizened Arcturan tried to smuggle a gem in his hollow fang.

Last in line was a tall, tanned and solemn Siriun who could have hidden nothing larger than a flea under his

tight, outlandish costume of brilliantly-colored wool shirt, corduroy breeches and hobnailed boots. He stood on the landing-ramp for several moments, wistfully surveying his old home town. It had grown and changed almost beyond recognition; he couldn't identify a single landmark. But that was to be expected. By Siriun time, he had been absent for a generation—although, to him, only three years had passed. That was the penalty paid by The Explorers. They dashed about

the galaxy at faster-than-light speeds, choosing sites for teleports on suitable planets. And when they returned to Elium, the difference between objective and subjective time had made them strangers. Probably not one of the friends he had made before he entered the Service remained alive. Explorers were lonely men.

"Koern!"

The passenger's heart leaped as his name was trilled by a familiar voice. It was Petarok, the Polarian importer. His plumage was grizzled with age now; his back was bent. But his triangular black eyes still snapped with vigor as he worked his way out of the crowd of onlookers and gripped Koern's huge work-roughened hands with his trembling, six-fingered ones.

Petarok quavered the four notes that signified "I have a place for you in my home. Come. What have you been up to this time? And where in the name of Hoark did you find those fantastic, ill-fitting clothes?"

It was late that night before Koern gave him a full answer. They were seated under the plastic dome that protected the Arcturan's exotic garden from the actinic rays of Sirius' tiny but lethal sister-sun. A princely meal was under the visitor's taut belt. Tall drinks were at hand.

"To sum it all up in a few notes," the mighty Explorer began, using the vocal shorthand that was the lingua franca of Federation citizens, "I left Elium in '68 with the Thirty-first Expedition. It took us one year, ship time—that is approximately 20 years, Sirium time—to reach our objective. It was a miserable little cluster of stars that, so we thought, had not been visited in a coon's age...."

"A coon's age?" Petarok stopped his old friend's lightning-fast flow of ideation. "What on Trantor does that mean?"

"Well...." Koern scratched his thatch of coarse curly hair. "I am not quite sure. It is an expression I picked up from the natives of the last

planet I visited. Let me put it this way: A coon is a small animal, properly called a racoon. It has a very short life. So, to those people, a 'coon's age' means an extremely long time. Do you follow me?"

"Not far," said the Arcturan, looking at his guest dubiously.

"It does sound a bit strange, especially to one trained to make every note express some idea with perfect accuracy. But let me continue: We sighted a GO-type sun with a number of planets. The third one looked as if it might support hydrocarbon life forms. The captain detailed me to investigate, while he took the ship on to the rim of the galaxy. (We had picked up signals which indicated that one of the monster vessels of the Inner Federation was poaching on our preserves out there.) He was to return for me in one planet-year.

"I was to explore the third planet; see whether it was ripe for colonizing; find out whether the Innere had established an illegal base there, and, if possible, make contact with the aborigines. But everything went wrong from the start. The jet blew a gasket; I had to land in heavy fog; I underestimated the gravity. I did manage to level out just above ground level and came to a stop only after the wings had sliced through the trunks of a number of trees. I really cut quite a caper, I can assure you."

"Caper?"

"The word is another localism. Capers are the berries of a small plant; they are used in making sauces. To cut one means to behave in an unusual way."

"How odd." Petarok ruffled his sparse plumage.

"It is what the natives call a figure of speech."

"Figure of speech'? That is a contradiction in terms."

"There are figures in dancing and in music, my friend. Why not in speech?"

"Pardon me. Pray continue."

KOERN sighed, and continued. "The plane came to a stop, wedged between two giant trees; its wings had been sheared off. It couldn't fly again without extensive repairs. Later, I found it was still as good as ever for ground-travel, although the intense blue flame from the exhaust had a tendency to set the forest afire.

"Well, I was prowling about the ship in the rain and fog, shivering because of the cold dampness on my bare skin, when I heard a most peculiar sound—something between a chatter and an intermittent bellow. I found that the noise was coming from a group of aborigines who had surrounded me. They were Siroids, but they were about a dozen hands-breadths shorter than I. With slight variations, the costumes of these dwarfs were like the one I was wearing when I left the liner today. The little I could see of their skins ranged from light pink to deep red."

"They wore clothing!" Petarok marvelled. "Real primitives, eh?"

"I must admit there is some justification for clothing in that dank woodland. But that wasn't the thing that struck me most at the time; you see, the natives were all staring at me with their tiny bearded mouths wide open. They were pointing at me with the cutting-tools they carried. And, without exception, they were making that loud cackling sound. A few seemed so overcome by emotion that they were pounding each other on the back. One or two were rolling on the ground."

"An attack-ritual of some kind?" Petarok hazarded.

"I thought so at first. But then one of them laid aside his tool and came forward, holding out his hand. I took it and he pumped my arm up and down, saying something that sounded like 'Hire yah, Greenhorn.'"

"'Greenhorn'?" puzzled the Arc-turan.

"Yes. I found later that some wild

animals living in that forest grow horns on their heads each year. When the horns are young and soft they are called 'green' although they actually are pink. Why the term should have been applied to me I never discovered."

"You mean you couldn't learn their language?"

"Well, I could learn it and I could not. The roots of their language go back to the one used on all planets colonized by the First Federation ten millenia ago, so I could communicate with them after a fashion, soon. But English, as they call their tongue, has become a semantic nightmare. It has been overgrown with hyperbole and the illusive figures of speech that I spoke of. A few words of English, liberally intermixed with references to obscure gods, are all that one needs to get along. (I found that the Arc-turan words you once taught me served very well for this purpose.) But the nuances of meaning escaped me. While one word in English is sufficient to describe a concrete object, hundreds of words are needed to express an idea, no matter how simple. Take that cackling sound they were making all the time. They called it 'laughter'. But the ideation of it never became clear to me.

"I stayed in that forest the full year, for several good reasons. A blacksmith, who had agreed to rebuild the jet's wings, never finished the work. Once his hammer was stolen by a woods-demon he called a pack rat. Then he told me an enemy—'Dutchman' seemed to be his name—had put a hex, or curse, on his forge so the fire would not burn. Also, he said the titanium I needed had to be mined in a far corner of the planet from which it was carried into the forest on the back of a slave named 'Mule.' The poor fellow! He was abject in his apologies.

"And there was the problem of fuel. Most of my oxozonide had been carried in the jet's wings. I had plenty

in the main tank to move the jet through the forest, but I didn't dare venture on long trips for fear I wouldn't have enough left to reach the ship when it returned. I kept asking the little men if there were some place where I could purchase oxozonide but could never make them understand. They thought that was my name for the jet.

"Also, after I became slightly exhilarated one night on their extraordinarily-potent beverages, I mentioned the Federation's plan for colonizing Earth, as the natives called it. My new friends were thrilled at the prospect and proceeded to tell me all about their planet. They assured me I would be wasting my time on exploration since all the land surfaces, from pole to pole, were covered by deep forests. Only a few trading-villages existed at junctions of some of the rivers.

"Finally, they begged and implored me to stay near them so I could protect them from the wrath of their Great God Weyerhaeuser."

"Could you not have told them that gods are mere superstitions?" Petarok asked.

KOERN shook his head, firmly. "Oh no; an Explorer is pledged never to undermine primitive customs. I had to pretend to fear Weyerhaeuser as much as they did. Their religion, you must understand, is just the reverse of the arborolatry found on many backward worlds. It is built around arboricide."

"Arboricide? The destruction of trees?" the Arcturan chirped in horror. "But deforestation is a major crime on every Federation planet."

"Earth isn't an Outer Federation planet, nor is it likely to become one, I fear. Anyway, I was told that their primary deity eats wood in almost unlimited quantities. Every year he must be placated by the sacrifice of millions of big trees; otherwise, Weyerhaeuser may cut off all supplies of alcoholic beverages. If you knew

these foresters, you would realize that that is the worst punishment that could befall them."

"Astonishing!" The feathered trader took the hint and refilled his guest's glass. "What machines did they use to achieve such a slaughter of trees?"

"Until I taught them to build a few time-savers, they did it all with hand tools—such as axes, saws and wedges. Of course they had help from their enslaved quadrupeds in getting the logs to the streams that served as their only arteries of transport. Occasionally I thought I heard faraway sounds that hinted at the existence of heavy machinery, but my lumberjack friends said I was mistaken.

"On the other hand, they were not as impressed as I had hoped when I used the jet to drag huge loads of logs; to break up jams in the rivers; and even to dig channels into parts of the forest particularly rich in trees. They did admire me when I sliced through huge trunks with one blow of the axe I had made. (They never asked me, so I didn't have to tell them I had affixed an atonic-separator to the edge of the blade.)

"The thing that most impressed them was that I could drink more, and sweat longer and louder, than any of them."

Petarok sighed and pushed the button which brought robots rolling with refreshments for the refreshments.

"Wasn't your life constantly in danger among those savages?"

"Not at all. They tagged around after me by the hundreds wherever I went, and adopted the work-routines I suggested without argument. Fact is, the only trouble I ever had was when I drove the jet too far down-river one day and they thought I had lost my way. They found me and were so piteous with their pleas as they pressed closely about me that I couldn't find it in my heart not to return to camp. ... No, Petarok, the

natives are quite gentle, except when their veracity is questioned or they go on one of their weekly tears."

"Tears, Koern?"

"That is another puzzler. The English dictionary I studied said tears are drops of moisture exuded by the eyes. Yet, on such occasions my lumberjacks *absorbed* vast quantities of moisture fortified with alcohol. Such orgies exhausted all of us every Saturday night until we couldn't hurt a fly for the next three days."

"I suppose a fly is a vicious animal of some kind?"

"No, it is a small but pestiferous and disease-bearing insect. There also are verminous mosquitoes, fleas and cooties. It is a miracle that I survived. Those pink Siroids really are tough, my friend; perhaps the incense they burn constantly to propitiate Weyerhaeuser makes them comparatively immune. Tobacco, they call it. Wish I had brought some back with me.

"Yes, I might have carved out a wooden kingdom on Earth if I could have survived those pests and the eternal flapjacks." Koern shook his head sadly.

"And what might a flapjack be?"

"If one took a round piece of throat-hide; greased it with tark-fat; burned it black, and drowned it in butter and simple syrup, one might have a replica of their main food article. Horrible!"

HE WENT on dreamily after finishing his drink. "But there were compensations; that was a vast virgin land. The natives were proud of it, even as they denuded it. They liked to engage in day-long contests to see which team of lumberjacks could destroy the most trees. If the topsoil washed away after its forest-cover was removed, why that was none of their concern. There was an apparently limitless supply.

"There was a girl, too. Flaxen braids down to her knees. She served

beverages at a nearby tavern. Pretty as a miniature. Her name was Babe. She was vastly pleased when I renamed the jet after her." Koern's voice trailed off. His black eyes probed the past.

"There was one trait they all had that irritated me at first," he resumed. "I thought they were pathological liars. In the evenings, gathered around wasteful outdoor fires, after eating their indigestible food and playing alleged music on raucous instruments, they would vie with one another in telling stories that seemed based on the most outrageous falsehoods. I was troubled greatly by this. How could any society, no matter how primitive, thrive on a steady diet of untruth...and flapjacks?

"But soon I found that each apparent lie was based on truth; that was when I began to sense something sinister in their yarns."

"Yarns?" queried Petarok.

"Yarn is their name for a kind of woolen string. The philology escapes me. Once my blacksmith friend suggested that the boys were 'stringing me,' but he only cackled when I asked him what that meant.

"Their stories told of log cabins so tall that the chimneys had to be hinged to let the moon go by—obviously an impossibility. Or they described rivers a mile wide and an inch deep; or supermen who wore seven-league boots; or hunters who could see and kill game hundreds of miles away. That might all have been pure myth except for one thing: "If anyone dared question the veracity of the tales, it called for a ferocious, hand-to-hand fight. Kicking, gouging, hobnailing, knifing, all were fair in the contest that ensued between the story teller and his challenger. Nobody, no matter how primitive, would fight to the death over a myth; and that was particularly true of my gentle lumberjacks."

"Could you repeat one of those

tales," the Arcturan begged. "I have a great interest in folklore."

"I will try to tell you the one that finally decided me to rejoin my ship," Koern answered. "The time for the rendezvous was drawing near, and the jet's wings still were not repaired. So, after dinner, I told the boys I was going to drive over to the blacksmith shop. It was a beautiful spring night. The jet-flame threw fantastic blue shadows among the trees bordering the old logging trail. I idled along, trying to decide whether to return to my lonely life as an Explorer, or—as she had suggested so tenderly the previous evening—to bunk up with Babe.

THERE WAS a long silence as the Explorer dwelt in the past. Finally, he said. "Well, I found the smithy dark. My friend must have gone off on a toot. (Now please don't ask me what a toot is, Petarok. The dictionary said that it is a sound made by a horn.)

"I bent nearly double, and succeeded in getting through the shop's doorway. Using my atoflash, I looked about for the jug of refreshments that the smith kept always on hand. In a corner, under a pile of junk, I caught the characteristic gleam of titanium. I dug under the pile. There were my wings, repaired and as good as new.

"I dragged them out and attached them to the fuselage. Then, after refreshing myself several times. . . (Yes, Petarok, I will have just one more short one). . . I idled back along the trail. The motor-exhaust seemed to be whispering: '*To go or to stay? To stay or to go?*'"

"I still had not made up my mind when I reached camp. I parked several hundred feet away and crept forward silently, not wishing to disturb the storytelling. Nobody noticed me as I sat down far back among the shadows.

"Jacques Marin, the gang boss, was in full swing. He was a wicked infighter in any brawl, so nobody ever questioned the truth of his tales.

" 'It always was called the year of the big wind after that,' he was saying. 'That was the year when this big feller showed up around Coupe Nez. He was swoopin' down out of the sky when we first caught sight of him, ridin' a fire-breathin' blue ox a hundred feet tall. And that ox was towin' a pine log a mile long. He must have known we were watching him and wanted to show off. Just before he landed he made the ox switch that log sideways. It mowed down a swath of trees fifty miles long 'fore it stopped rolling.'

"I held my breath, out there in the shadows," Koern interrupted the story. "My spine prickled. What creature in all the universe could accomplish a feat like that? Could it be. . .? Impossible, I told myself, but I continued listening intently. This was the first time I had ever been an eavesdropper and it went against the grain. But if I could obtain important information for the Outer Federation. . .

" 'This feller was a good fifty feet tall, himself,' Jack was continuing, after he had moistened his vocal chords. 'His round, stupid-lookin' face glowed like the settin' sun behind him. He climbed off the ox, dusted hands as big as haunches of beef and said: 'Well, gents. How's about bendin' the old knee to the Federation; I've come to make slaves of the whole human race.'

"The Federation! My heart stood still," Koern interpolated. "So a representative of the poaching Inner Federation *had* contacted Earth! No Explorer ever has met a citizen of the I. F., but they must be of gigantic size to accomplish the interstellar damage they do to us. And this talk of slavery! It was a dead giveaway. We never, never use that word.

" 'Well, we decided we couldn't lick the guy,' Jacques went on after the cackling died down around the fire, 'but we thought we might bamboozle him.' (No, Petarok, please don't interrupt me again.) 'We told

him a cock-and-bull story and then we put him to work to keep him out of mischief. First thing we got him to do was to dredge the Mississippi River so we could float our logs plumb down to New Orleans. Then we had him put out a volcano or two that had been bothering us...and dam up the Great Lakes...and a few other little chores. Man, we had that giant as busy as a cat on a hot griddle for a hundred years.'

"By this time I realized that there was only one thing I could do," Koern explained as he wiped the sweat from his broad brow. "I had to get back to the ship and warn the captain. If those of the Inner Federation could accomplish such miracles, we of the outer systems must start building up our defenses at once, or face destruction. With infinite slowness I began crawling back toward the jet. But before I got out of earshot I heard somebody beside the fire call out.

• "Hey, Jack," the voice yelled.

"What was the name of the big feller?"

"Well," the gang boss answered, 'we couldn't rightly call him by the one he gave us. It sounded too corny. But we remembered there was a village idiot in Coupe Nez named Paul Bunyan. So, among ourselves, we always referred to him that way.'

"When Jacques said that," Koern concluded, "such a riot of cackling and bellowing broke out around the fire that it scared the birds in the trees. I knew that that was my chance to escape without attracting attention. I ran like mad, jumped into the jet and gunned the motor. Twenty-four Earth hours later I made contact with my ship."

He stood up and yawned mightily. "Well, thanks for the entertainment, friend Petarok," he said. "I must be going now; have to make a full report to the Federation Council in the morning."



REMEMBERED WORDS

Your Votes Rated
Them This Way

Last issue's crop of letters brought forth quite a large number of votes, and the race was a tight one. Only a few points separated Alice Bullock, Wilkie Conner, and Vernon McCain, who were far ahead; McCain, for example, drew twice as many votes as the contestant who finished fourth.

The consensus of opinion seems to be that there should be no tight policy on length or subject-matter in regard to the letters, but that the editor should look closely to be sure that the long ones are really interesting. Fair enough.

Will the three winners now please let me know which originals from our March issue strike their fancy? Miss Bullock may have first choice; Messers Conner and McCain should list one and two alternate choices, respectively.

Letters, I repeat, are welcomed; they may be hand-written or typewritten, as you prefer. But *please!* If you go to the trouble of typing your letter, thus earning our gratitude, do it thoroughly by *typing double space, and using only one side of the paper*, so the missive won't have to be re-typed here! RWL



Readin' and Writhin'

Book Reviews by Damon Knight and the Editor

MURDER in Millenium VI, by Curme Gray. Shasta, 1951; 249 pp., \$3.00.

The fiction writer who ventures outside the narrow circle of the times and places familiar to his readers, has always had one knotty problem to resolve before he can put a word on paper. Reduced to extremes, it goes like this: He can address himself openly to here-and-now readers, and explain everything unfamiliar as he goes along—in which case he commits himself to a continual breach of the reader's self-forgetful illusion; or he can write as he imagines his protagonist would, for a contemporary audience, and explain next to nothing—in which case, likelier than not, the reader will trip over an unlighted piece of stage-furniture on every second page until he gives up in disgust.

The first is the easiest and crudest method: all the early Utopian novels were written in the form of travelogues; historical fiction used to be copiously peppered with footnotes and other author-intrusions: "*The reader must remember, of course, that in the Nazareth of Jesus' time, there were no motor-cars at all...*"

Between this and the second pole, luckily, there's a long series of mixed solutions—all the way from stories in which the characters seize upon any pretext to explain the obvious to each other (and the explainee usually says, "Oh, yeah,

that's right; I forgot") to such brilliant exercises in subtlety as Fritz Leiber's "Coming Attraction."

The second basic alternative is just possible in historical fiction: Robert Graves, with the aid of one simple device—writing in the character, not of a contemporary story-teller, but of a contemporary historian—uses it and frequently gets clean away. (But in his one experiment with the future he prudently chose the first method; so did Franz Werfel.) In science-fiction—assuming that the reader is expected to understand what's going on without a guidebook and in one reading, it is flatly impossible.

"Murder in Millenium VI," therefore, is a profoundly perplexing book. Shasta's blurb-writer was clearly at a loss: "A first novel. A new name. Almost out of nowhere has come a PHENOMENAL performance. How will it be known? As the first of its kind...a new direction in imaginative work? As the most astonishing Future Mystery ever written?" And the author of the publicity sheet sent to reviewers was, I would judge, typing with one hand and biting the fingernails of the other: "Unusual love interest. Economy of telling. Conception excludes any vestige of nature. Style has a remarkable 'modal' flavor. Gave our book designer the feeling of ancient Egypt."

I venture to suggest that if "modal

flavor" means anything, Shasta is as much in the dark about it as I am, and that the book designer's Egyptian feeling is attributable to something he ate; but I don't blame the publishers. In their place, I would have done as they did—published the book with a prefatory apologetic stammer.

Curme Gray's performance is breathtaking for sheer audacity and stubbornness. Although the story is set six thousand years in the future—in a matriarchal society, whose customs and technology bear no resemblance to our own—there is not a word in the book that might not logically have been written by the narrator for the edification of his own posterity.

About three-quarters of the background can be puzzled out from the context: the matriarchy is based on physical superiority (females are flat-chested and bigger than males); it contains remnants of the Triple Goddess worship familiar to Graves readers; the world of Millenium VI lives on food pills and water, and has forgotten death.

The rest, including the most trivial details of stage-setting, is submerged. The book opens with a cipher moving in a vacuum:

Her tall spare body wrapped in a robe, she came out of the bathroom.

...Hilda smiled.

Perfect and permanent, she was thinking; and created by women. But now a male was butting in. And not just any male. That one. Stupid, too!

She frowned.

Damn it! Why?

She strode toward the closed arch opposite her. The door slid aside into the wall. She heard a tapping in the hall, approaching on her left. Already dressed, Alec was delivering the next breakfast. Neither could see the other, and she ignored her ears. Her body hit his extended arms. Since he was a head shorter and only half as broad, he was spun about; the articles he carried went rolling along the hall....

Persevering, the reader will eventually learn that the male referred to is Victor Mitchel, the story's narrator, who is about to be interviewed by the Matriarch for a secretarial position; that he is Hilda's

brother, that Wilmot is their mother and Alec their father. But he never will find out why Alec and Hilda couldn't see each other in the hall.

Similarly, some of the means of communication used by the characters are made clear by context early in the story (telement, clairvoyance); others remain incomprehensible (communion, "neutral").

The effect of all this is a little like that of a shadow-play performed behind too many layers of gauze; or like a radio drama tuned in after the first commercial—nothing assumes any definite shape or color; cast and stage-settings alike have a dreamlike insubstantiality; the burden of visualisation is almost entirely on the reader.

VICTOR MITCHEL and Barbara Porter, two century-old youngsters, are both throwbacks—Barbara physically (she has breasts and a complexion), Victor mentally (in his instinctive distaste for the ordered, termite-like existence of Millenium VI. They want to marry, but can't till Barbara either is elected to an administrative post or finds a job in business; like the other young women of her generation, she's been hunting without success for thirteen years.

Wilmot, Victor's mother, Chairwoman of the Board for Business, is an ambitious woman who has been four times defeated in the contest for the Matriarchy.

Alec, his father, is a secret masculist whose hobby is ancient books; he owns the only three known to be in existence—"Palmer's Method," "Hobbies," and a volume called "Crime, a History," which Alec takes to be a history of the world.

Hilda, his non-identical twin, hates Victor because he was born first, and so ranks before her in one category of precedence.

Gertrude Franklin, Barbara's great-aunt, Deaconess of the Synod on Science, has a weak heart and a guilty secret: Barbara's mother mated outside the Stud, and outside her caste—an unheard-of double irregularity.

These are the suspects when, at what was to have been Victor's audience, the Matriarch is found dead. This is another irregularity; Alec, who's familiar with the subject from his reading and because his own entire pedigree died in a hushed-up accident two and a half centuries be-

fore, has to define and decline the word; and even then it's a long while before the others can quite grasp the idea.

When it sinks in, everyone is in a tizzy for fear death will again become a custom—as it evidently was in the misty pre-Matriarchal days. Wilmot assumes the throne, being next in line according to law (although it's surely odd that there's a law of succession at all, since death is unheard of); and by manipulating the problem according to the strict Aristotelian logic of the times eventually turns up the possibility of murder.

A search of the archives (Archival Tele-ment, which seemingly records everything that happens everywhere) should disclose the identity of the murderer; meanwhile, since the most important object is to choke off the widening consequences (the "sequence") of the irregularity, the ex-Matriarch's body will be concealed in the Matriarchal chambers—the only spot on the globe insulated from Archival Tele-ment.

Nevertheless, Wilmot's preliminary announcement of the death and her succession produces a temporary work stoppage; the "sequence" can't be halted until the murderer is discovered.

Alec's "Crime, a History" includes an (incomplete) analysis of the sealed-room problem which first directs suspicion at him: he was the first to touch the body; the Matriarch might have been only stunned or sleeping, and Alec might have choked her while pretending to feel for the pulse in her throat. His motive, of course, would have been a desire to restore the patriarchy; it turns out that according to this same "History" the first patriarchy endured from 3750 B. C. to 1952 A. D., old reckoning—a total of 5,702 years—and from that date to the present exactly the same number of years has passed.

This bubble bursts when Alec, having barricaded himself and Victor in the living-room of the Matriarch's suite, is found the next morning stabbed with a pair of scissors; suspicion next, naturally, falls on Victor—the theory being that he committed the first crime in collusion with Alec, and for the same reason; the second to keep Alec from informing.

Now, however, Wilmot announces that Alec has confessed the first murder to her, then presumably killed himself for fear

of punishment. This seems to settle it. Concurrently, the secret of Barbara's pedigree having come out, Wilmot forbids her to meet or communicate with Victor.

Nothing is settled as far as Victor is concerned. He intends to marry Barbara in spite of his mother's edict and the putative bride-to-be's own recurrent attacks of coyness; as for the second murder, Victor is half convinced that he did it in his sleep. But Barbara first proves that he hasn't the necessary strength; and then, examining Alec's body, discovers a new clue (one wrist is slit, and there's a bloodstain under it—evidence that Alec was already dead when the scissors-blade was plunged into his chest). At this point Victor realizes the scissors must have been ordered from Stores for the purpose of the killing, and checks the records. The scissors were ordered by Hilda.

After four chapters of doubtful relevance, Wilmot announces her intentions of deleting Barbara's memory of Victor; Victor tells her that unless she reverses this decision he'll inform on Hilda—and proof of the crime will always be available; records are indexed under too many categories ever to be satisfactorily altered. Wilmot's answer to this is to clout him on the jaw, knocking him out, and to remove his "remitter", the telepathic-clairvoyant-communication-neutral gadget with which everybody communicates. When Victor comes to, he's under guard and the Mass at which Wilmot will first formally appear as Matriarch is about to begin. Victor has to appear, since failure to do so would be an irregularity; but without his remitter there's little he can do. When the ceremony is over it will be too late; Wilmot will have time to alter both his and Barbara's memories.

What he does, immediately after Wilmot takes the throne, is to call out, "Hilda, it doesn't matter whether or not you slit his wrist. He was already dead"; whereupon both Hilda and Wilmot incontinently drop dead.

Victor swipes Wilmot's remitter, overpowers Barbara, and drags her out, using the remitter to distract the celebrants and guards. After a notably foggy chase through the building, he reaches The Switch and shuts down all the power all over the planet, inaugurating Patriarchy Two; he then explains the whole puzzle to Barbara (I'll come to this in a mo-

ment); but their fadeout clinch is forestalled by Barbara's realization that the globe's heating system is also off.

Victor turns the switch on in time to keep the entire population from freezing to death, and in an epilogue we learn that there isn't going to be any patriarchy. History does not repeat; but evidently some sort of compromise is in the process of working itself out, and has been for two and a half centuries. As for Barbara, she'll enter the Matriarchal elections—and win, says Victor, or he'll pull the switch again.

Victor, in the interval between being slugged by Wilmot and appearing at the Mass, had tested a scissors-blade on his own wrist and discovered it was painful—therefore, he reasoned, it would have been impossible to kill Alec in this way without waking him up. He confirmed his suspicion by opening the couch-cover and finding that no blood had soaked through to the upholstery: ergo, neither the wrist-slitting nor the stabbing killed Alec.

The method used, by Wilmot, was "communion": this is also the method by which she had planned to erase the lovers' recollections of each other. Wilmot slit the corpse's wrist to confuse the issue; afterward, Hilda—afraid that Alec would escape without punishment for the murder of the Matriarch (actually, of course, also Wilmot's doing and with the same weapon)—stabbed him with the scissors she found in his hand. It was Wilmot, however, who ordered the scissors in Hilda's name; and it was also Wilmot—not Alec, as everyone had thought—who engineered Victor's audience as an excuse for getting everyone on the scene. Hilda knew all about "communion," except the fact that it could be used for murder; she guessed that when Victor called to her during the Mass; Wilmot guessed that she guessed, and each struck instantly—yes, via "communion"—to forestall the other.

Now this may not make sense, depending entirely on what "communion" is supposed to be; the process, frequently referred to, is never explained, any more than a mundane novelist would explain the telephone, or the Republican Party. The only clue offered indirectly is the statement that communion is commonly believed to be impossible between persons—which seems to put it in the same

order of reality as van Vogt's ingravity parachute.

In short, as a formal novel of detection the story is a bust—as, by the rules, it ought to be. But as a Pole Two solution of the problem discussed at the beginning of this review—for my money a much more difficult *sour de force*—it's a prodigious three-quarter success. The reader's imagination (mine, at any rate) is seldom quite adequate for the strain Gray imposes on it, but at times it boggles completely; nevertheless, the very strictures that make the book hard to read also give it a curious authority. Gray's future world, where it's visible, is a masterly job—and the picture carries conviction even where (perhaps because) it's incomplete.

This is Curme Gray's first novel.

If, as I devoutly hope, he survives the traditional ordeal of writing a second, his third ought to be something to watch for.



SEETEE SHIP, by Will Stewart. Gnome, 1951; 255 pp., \$2.75.

Nobody reads the science news more conscientiously than Jack Williamson; when contra-terrene matter came along, he got there first and, as "Will Stewart", made it his own. If CT exists, he reasoned, then a collision between an invading contraterrene planetoid and a transMartian planet could easily account for the asteroids (in which case the asteroid belt would contain fragments of both kinds of matter); and when it comes time for men to open up the Belt, the drifting seetee worldlets, ready to explode with atom-bomb violence at the first touch of "normal" matter, will be a problem and a challenge.

A challenge, because that tremendous latent energy, if it could be controlled, would be a power-source second to none in the universe; but to work seetee, form it, manipulate it in any way at all would be impossible without something which seems equally impossible: a seetee bedplate—a process for putting terrene handles on seetee tools and seetee machines on terrene foundations.

This assembly of ideas is a perfect specimen of heavyweight science-fiction thinking, the kind of brilliant speculation which ought to (and often does) form the core of a memorable work of fiction. Having

put it together, Williamson, in the first half of this novel, claps it to his breast like a skin diver, holds his breath, and sinks with it about as low as it's humanly possible for a talented writer to go.

Beginning with the opening pseudo-quotation, in which we are asked to believe that a bad blurb for Williamson's story could be written and published as part of a "Spaceman's Handbook," every last meticulous detail of the background is as false as a dollar drum:

...Massive and angular, the old house... Its chromium gingerbread, in style forty years ago [i. e., in 2150], was stained and tarnished now... He followed her up the steps between the rust-streaked but stately columns...

...and presumably, although the author does not say so, the door was opened by a creaking stove-polished robot with a tray of atomic juleps in its hand.

Rick Drake, hero of the first 129 pages of "Seetee Ship," is a young asterite who shares his father's dream of a workable seetee bedplate. But the asteroids are ruled by a "High Space Mandate" administered jointly, in an uneasy truce, by all the Solar governments—there's a Jovian Soviet; a Martian Reich; and, I suppose, a Venerian Kuomintang; the Terrestrial government seems to consist of the board of directors of a corporation called Interplanet. (I am not, either, making all this up as I go along!)

Sinister old Interplanet isn't interested in the dream of seetee power—but it is interested in seetee bombs. Rick, returning to the asteroids after four years spent on Earth, earning a spacial engineer's degree, meets Interplanet heiress Karen Hood and lets himself be soft-talked into taking a job for Interplanet instead of rejoining his father and Rob McGee as he'd planned.

It isn't enough that the bedplate sounds impossible; we have to be continually reminded that it does. The profusion of characters wandering in and out muttering "Crackpot! Won't work!" irresistibly reminds me of the first reel of a horror movie; in the second, of course, the snubbed scientist, mumbling "I'll show them! I'll show them all!" synthesizes the elixir of life from the spinal fluid of an ape and promptly goes off his rocker, leading to the shrieks and running footsteps of reel 3.

Something of that sort here would be an immeasurable relief; but no such luck. For seven chapters, the reader is kept occupied with the pallid poor-boy-rich-girl romance

of Rick and Karen, and with Rick's give-me-another-month-I'll-get-there realization that his work is going into the file marked "Bomb", not "Bedplate".

Thereafter, quite unexpectedly, the story picks up. Rick, with whom even the author must have lost patience by now, is abandoned as he's about to take off with Rob McGee to investigate a mysterious seetee explosion; Captain Paul Anders, heretofore only a perfunctory entry in the Karen Hood sweepstakes, takes over.

This is a decided improvement all around. Anders, in spite of talking like an American's idea of an Englishman, is nowhere near so gruesomely clean-cut and true-blue as Rick; and the new puzzle is genuinely interesting in itself. A seetee asteroid has exploded, although its orbit was clear; no known terrene body could have collided with it. Two fragments have been driven away from the supposed point of impact; one of them appears to be somewhat larger than the original asteroid and its present temperature is close to zero absolute (two more impossibilities); the other, moving at a fantastic velocity, appears to have been an alien artifact—a broken-off hollow golden needle, with spiral stairway inside.

Add to this a photophone call received by Rick from McGee, sent from a position where McGee couldn't possibly have been at the time, and stating that there's a safe bedplate waiting for them on the larger fragment of the explosion—a call which McGee, a truthful man, later flatly denies having sent.

Just the same, Rick and McGee head for the fragment in the *Good-by Jane*; so does Anders, in the Guard-cruiser *Orion*, with a motley crew drawn from the four-power Mandate forces (including one low-comedy character who rejoices in the name of Mikhail Ivanovich Protopopov). Anders stops off at a rock called Obania to interrogate Ann O'Banion, the girl Rick left behind him; before he gets there, however, more mystery turns up in the shape of the *Good-by Jane*, some thousands of kilometers from where she ought to be, with a load of unconscious Guard personnel aboard. Rick and McGee won't explain; baffled, Anders takes the Guardsmen aboard, and turns them over to another Guard-cruiser, the *Perseus*, after landing on Obania. With Ann, he visits Freedonia (perhaps Messrs. Williamson and Barnhouse should compare

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notes), another rock where Rick's father, McGee, and Ann have been trying to perfect a bedplate. They've got a hunk of seetee cushioned on a paragravity field for an anvil and another suspended above it for a hammer; but the system's no good—striking the anvil makes it oscillate dangerously near the terrene matter around it.

More mystery: a photophone call is beamed in from the seetee fragment to Freedonia—but it's in no human tongue. Are there seetee people?

WITH ANN still aboard, Anders heads for the fragment to find out. On the way, still more mystery: aboard the *Perseus*, the unconscious Guardsmen have revived and explained themselves to the ship's commander, a Martian-German named von Falkenburg, and whatever they've told him has turned him into a freebooter—he's subdued the loyal members of his own crew and is following the *Orion* in defiance of orders. Later the *Good-by Jane* turns up again, on an odd orbit, and when the *Orion* speaks to her, Rick and McGee stoutly deny any knowledge of their earlier meeting or the drugged Guardsmen.

Worse yet, the fragment, when they sight it, is no fragment—it's a huge, egg-shaped object of worked metal, half terrene and half seetee, with four projecting golden spikes like the other "fragment"—but all intact. As they approach, a Guardcruiser appears, apparently wrecked on the surface of the seetee ship; when they speak it, it fires on them. They return the fire, silencing the other ship's guns; but as they maneuver to land, it rises on a collision-course to meet them. To all appearance, it strikes them a glancing blow and then vanishes.

Boarding the alien ship, Anders and Ann find more riddles, and a few answers. The terrene and seetee halves of the ship are separated by "bedplates", all right—seetee chrome-steel mushrooms on terrene iron stems. The ship that fired on them, and then escaped, would seem to have been the *Perseus*; they find corpses inside the alien hull whose spacesuits are stamped with the name of that ship. And a mysterious skulking figure turns out to be Rob McGee, who claims to have landed with Rick in the *Good-by Jane* some hours ago; Rick, he says, is outside on the hull of the ship. And the *Perseus*, McGee tells them, was

destroyed when its captain tried to hide it in an ore chute inside the ship; a field that breaks down molecular cohesion turned it into a pile of gray dust.

All of these items are *per se* impossibilities, or else mutually contradictory; trusting nobody, Anders goes out alone to make sure his own ship is still safe, and finds that Protopopov and the rest of the crew have mutinied and are about to take off to carry the news of the seetee ship to the Jovian Soviet. As the *Orion* rises spaceward, however, fire from another cruiser blasts it back and leaves it a disabled hulk. Anders is grazed by a shell-fragment, gets a leak in his suit, and barely makes it back inside in time.

When he regains consciousness, Anders adds plus two and minus two and gets an answer that explains most of the riddles: seetee is inside-out matter in more ways than one—the ship is moving backwards in time. Other seetee masses, the Seetee Drift in the asteroid belt, have been "captured" by surrounding terrene matter and carried along in the same temporal direction; but the ship, which wasn't involved in the primal collision, still has its original temporal momentum. The last to arrive on the ship became the first; the ship Anders fired on was the *Orion*, then under the control of the mutineers. The "alien voices" were their own, heard backwards. And the explosion that set off the whole chain of events, when the ship struck the seetee asteroid and was utterly destroyed except for one golden needle, hasn't happened yet. Our friends have five hours to repair the damaged *Good-by Jane* and get clear before the collision—but they know they will, because Anders has already spoken to Rick aboard the *Jane*, carrying Ann, McGee, Anders himself, and a load of unconscious mutineers, back to Pallas.

As for the bedplate, Rick has the answer to that: the aliens made them of an alloy capable of holding a permanent negative paragravity field; obeying the inverse square law; opposing seetee and terrene plates can be forced into almost-contact, but will never touch. Finally, the evidence that the aliens destroyed themselves, and probably their planet as well, by misusing terrene-seetee energy for warfare, gives Anders a less-complacent attitude toward seetee bombs—he'll quit Interplanet and help

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There must be a place in this stellar expedition for an artist, Haines thought; but his talents didn't seem to fit in.

SOMETHING FOR THE BIRDS

by Dave Dryfoos

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

WITHOUT remembering exactly how he'd gotten there, Evan Haines found himself lurking behind a pillar at one of those small, select art-galleries in mid-town Manhattan. A man and a girl strolled up, the girl all curved and soft, the man straight and hard. Awed, they stopped before the nearest canvas, a colorfully-complex abstraction. "Genius!" the man murmured.

"Pure emotion!" the girl sighed. "Doesn't it make you feel good?"

To make her feel even better, Haines emerged from his lurking-place and admitted having painted that picture—and all the others in this, his first one-man show. Promptly the soft curved girl flung herself into his arms. The straight hard man bellowed in rage, and from behind Haines' back clawed at the girl's clinging arms. Haines awoke.

•

Without remembering exactly how he'd gotten there, Haines found himself face-down on the warm soft sand of the planet, imprisoned within a globular plastic helmet and spun-glass body armor. From behind his back, hard straight Oscar Garston, leader of this First Stellar Expedition, clawed at the clinging arms of sleep.

"Get up!" Garston roared, apparently not for the first time. "Get on your feet, Eightball!"

Haines scrambled erect. "I'm sorry, sir," he sputtered; "has anything



The "birds" wheeled overhead as Haines worked desperately.

happened?"

"Has anything happened?" Garston mocked. "Only that some of these bird-things came and hoisted the roof off my shack. Merely that the wind has scattered my papers all over the

landscape. But it's nothing to worry about, this business of sleeping on guard."

Appreciative snickers formed an obligato to Garston's tirade. Haines felt sure the entire twelve-man crew was awake, and listening through their helmet-sets.

"As long as the crew's alert, sir," he said, "don't you think I might as well pick up those papers."

"Go ahead," Garston told him. "Desert your guard-post; you're no use here, anyhow."

Haines hesitated, confused by the sarcasm.

"Don't stand there!" Garston shouted. "Get those papers before the birds do!"

Vacantly, Haines stared upward at the sentinals soaring over the camp. They numbered about a dozen—huge, scaly flying lizards, hovering and circling on fifteen-foot wings.

Already one had swooped for a fluttering, windborne paper. While Haines gaped, the thief seized its trophy in a six-toed talon and carried it aloft.

Haines ran under the bird, waving his arms and shouting impotently into his throat-mike. Anonymous mockery stabbed through the earphones, urging him on.

"Faster, Eightball!" someone shouted.

Another was more critical: "Let's have more grace in those movements, Art-Boy."

Haines decided not to be urged on; the stolen paper was irretrievable, anyhow. He stopped, switched off his communications-set, and went rapidly to work gathering the other records from where they drifted over the bare red sand or fluttered against the barbed-wire barricade.

He knew that the boys were right, for once; this time he'd really been an eightball. Sleeping on guard, of all things...

Maybe he'd always been an eightball. Maybe he deserved to be everybody's butt.

BUSILY picking up documents, Haines shook his head, wondering how things could have gone so wrong. Here he'd spent nearly all this twenty-four years dreaming and scheming for a chance to paint the scenery and catch the feeling of unexplored Space. He'd studied every photograph taken by the one ship that had preceded them to this Earth-type planet, till he could reproduce each from memory. He'd known more about Space-travel than any other graphic artist in the USA—had made himself a natural for this job. But it wasn't working out...

Sighing, he acknowledged that lack of social skills had something to do with his failure—painting was a solo performance, while most of the others had always worked in groups. But it wasn't his fault that none of them understood Art, nor wanted to.

Like right after *Brennschluss*, when he'd set to work to show how he felt about the stars as they'd appeared in the ship's observation-ports. The men had cared nothing for his feeling—had derisively agreed his work didn't look like the stars, and, when he'd tried to explain it wasn't supposed to, had contemptuously forbidden him to paint with oils enroute, on the flimsy ground that the fumes fouled up the airconditioning. As if anyone could catch the brilliance of a sun in pastels or water-color!

He'd never been listened to, after that—had never had a chance, for instance, to explain how Art could be a point of contact with the beings they'd come to study. Yet it could be—and of all arts, painting was the most universal; it had certainly transcended the barriers of time, space, and language down on Earth!

But these fellows just didn't know that; and they didn't know what to expect from him, either, he decided bitterly. Take that last trip to those sandstone cliffs now stabbing ragged spires at the setting sun. Garston hadn't meant to be cruel, Haines admitted inwardly, but the demand had

meant use of a rest-period to get the sketches in shape, and guard-duty'd followed without any chance for sleep...

But *that* wasn't an excuse! There was *no* excuse—except this damned planet, with its cloud-canopy that distorted all colors by adding jaundiced shades of yellow. Everything was distorted here—even a fellow's personality.

Trotting tiredly after an especially-elusive bit of paper, Haines thought of how tiredly he had trotted from the cliff-dwellings. They'd shown up in pictures taken by the unmanned ship. Under the cliffs they clung to, were a half-dozen geometrically-laid-out fields of what looked like grain, each in a different stage of ripening, as if planting had been timed to assure a continuous harvest. Naturally, everyone had assumed some sort of neolithic culture to exist here; the Expedition had been formed to contact it.

And what had they found, that made them trot back so tiredly? Birds' nests! The supposed cliff-dwellings were the nests of these huge and fearsome bird-things—the fields, unexplained oases in the bone-dry desert.

Of course, the birds could have planted those crops...but no one knew; no one knew anything that was applicable to this world. The Expedition was completely frustrated in its efforts to contact native life-forms. Yes—and as always, frustration had given rise to the need for a scapegoat.

Impulsively, Haines opened his transmitter, and said, "Baaaah!" When he'd snapped the switches shut again, he felt much better.

THE MEN re-roofing Garston's shack gave Haines some ugly black glares when he returned with his armload of papers. Their resentment added much to his burden of guilt: the time they'd spent on this unexpected job had come out of a badly-needed rest-period.

Much seemed to have been added

to Garston's burden of anger, too—he was nearly beyond speech. Still, he appeared anxious to be fair. "All right," he grunted. "I suppose you want a chance to explain."

Explain why he'd slept on guard? Say he'd been tired, with the whole crew obviously exhausted? Hardly!



Dredging his mind for an evasion, Haines dragged up the subject of Art, that he'd been trying for so long to broach. "Sir," he said slowly, trying to keep his thoughts ahead of his words, "I think the birds took your roof off because they feel the shack is ugly."

"Oh, you do! You think your refined esthetic sense that sets you apart from us Philistines is shared by the birds, do you?"

He *was* set apart, Haines realized. The muttered jeers now growling through his earphones seemed anonymous because the jeerers lacked individuality for him. He was Eightball—they were They. Only Garston counted with him, and that largely because Garston was Boss—the first boss he'd ever had.

He had to go on—had to prove to this boss that he wasn't wholly an eightball, after all.

"Look," he said, speaking now with desperate haste, "flowers attract birds and insects by their form and color—and Man finds flowers pretty, too. Birds get their mates through the display of plumage, and Man collects this plumage, and wears it. Doesn't it seem as if many forms of life share the same sense of beauty?"

"Maybe," Garston grumbled; "but what's that got to do with sleeping on guard?"

"Nothing, sir. But—well, I'd like to try attracting natives by painting

for them. You've tried every way you could think of to get a spark of intelligence out of one or another of the living things we've seen around here—and those we assume to exist but haven't seen. You've appealed to curiosity, by displaying tools and equipment; challenged the sense of property by harvesting some of those crop-like plants; sent us wandering around with silly, welcoming smiles on our faces. Yet the only interest displayed in us comes from these gruesome bird-things overhead—and they seem like so many vultures, interested in a sick lamb."

"Oh, *now* I get the connection," Garston said bitingly. "You don't do *your* job very well, so you want a crack at *mine*." He smiled toothily. "Brother! Now I've heard everything."

Haines kept quiet, waiting. Everyone had tuned in—he could hear them breathing. Garston toed some sand into a pile, then suddenly kicked the pile aside.

"All right," he said, "I'll take you up on your idea—if you take me up on this: if you don't want to go back to work, just put down those papers and leave; go and paint. If you make any kind of a contact at all in the twenty hours between now and night-fall, I'll personally tout you as a hero. But if you refuse to work with the rest of us, and nothing comes of your solo efforts, when we get back to Earth I'll have you tried."

The tacit offer of forgiveness was tempting to Haines. He stood silent, nearly ready to give up his painting project and join in fixing the shack.

Then someone muttered, "See? All talk and no guts."

Haines handed his papers to Garston. "I think I'll gamble," he said.

The mutterer chanted, "You'll be SORry!"

WITH communications-switches closed against interrupting sound, Haines carried camp-stool, easel, paint-box, and a couple of prepared canvases up a small knoll just

outside the barbed-wire barricade surrounding ship and camp. The load taxed his strength; at the top, he paused for breath.

The ship was to the east, a truncated cone. To the west were the cliffs—and the setting sun. Forested hills closed in the northern horizon; hills so steeply broken and so heavily matted with vegetation that Garston had kept clear of them, choosing the bare desert as their first subject of study because it offered less cover for anything hostile.

Garston had chosen the desert in fear, Haines suddenly decided. Everyone in the crew suffered from the same feeling—fear of the unknown. Each could conceal it only from himself.

They'd come to contact alien life-forms, yet had avoided the forest that could logically be expected to support the most life. They had come to contact the natives, yet dressed to avoid contact with even the air of this world. They'd collected no specimens because they couldn't safely handle them—couldn't bring to Earth materials that might harbor strange diseases.

They could only *look* at this still-un-named world, and they didn't know what they were looking at. Everything was like these little pits, here in the red sand at his feet. The pits could be lairs, or tracks, or some unfamiliar property of the sand itself. No one knew.

Just looking at those pits made Haines' stomach churn, but he forced himself to stay—to use them, in fact, as his inspiration.

He would paint the fear that ate within him, depict in oils the surrounding landscape as seen through the haze of horror that blurred his vision. A nonobjective painting, that would make it—a picture of how he felt, not what he saw.

Wouldn't it be a laugh if the birds could understand what the crew could not?

To work, then. A small canvas, so there'd be some hope he might accomplish in two hours what few could

do in two months. For speed, one already started, with a dull light yellow ground on which darker features could be made to grow in a frenzy that reversed the medieval process of putting light colors on a dark background.

A frenzy that became the more frantic as its futility became the more evident. A frenzy that aroused no more interest in the soaring bird-things than it did in the soaring cliffs that looked down his neck from three miles away.

When he quit, after the self-allotted two hours Earthtime were an hour past, Haines liked his work. The frenzy showed, but was suited to a portrait of fear. Never had he worked so well so fast.

Never had he worked to less point. The painting pleased him, but that fact was immaterial; it didn't please anything else on the surface of this planet.

He propped it up in the sand, a hundred yards away from the easel, hoping its isolation there might overcome any shyness that kept the soaring bird-things from swooping low to view it, knowing his hope was futile.

But then, maybe the bird-things weren't the highest life-form here. Maybe there was some other sort of being he should try to attract. How did one know? And how could one paint, knowing nothing of the tastes of the viewer?

He went back to the easel and pressed a gadget at his neck that brought a benzedrine pill within reach of his lips. Chewing its bitterness without water, he wondered how many Earthdays had passed since he'd last slept.

Never mind. Work to be done. Non-objective painting didn't go, here—he'd have to try a recognizable planetary landscape.

THIS TIME he started more soberly, trying to catch the yellow, cloud-palled sunlight's effect on the jagged pinnacles of multi-colored sandstone, and on the reddish sand that

swelled to their base, devoid of vegetation, but scarred by freshets and bruised under rock-falls.

The work didn't go very well. He took more benzedrine—two, this time.

Soon he began to jitter. Careful brushwork gave way to smears of color squeezed from the tubes and carved with the palette-knife. He worked like a madman for an additional hour, and then, calling the job completed, looked up as if to take a bow.

Only the rising wind peered over his shoulder. It pointed grit-laden fingers at his work, dotting the sticky pigments with dirt as if trying to help.

The experiment was a failure—no native life-form took the slightest interest in what he'd been doing.

Carefully, fighting down an urge to erratic motion that was born of benzedrine, Haines folded and stacked his equipment. He paid pedantic attention to each detail of stowage, giving the simple operations as much concentration as a savant might bestow on a complex and crucial experiment.

But he couldn't stall forever; with paintbox closed, easel folded, and other materials arranged for carrying, he had to consider the consequences of failure.

Discipline here had grown from the laws of the sea—a quasi-military regime imposed on civilians in the face of a common danger. Haines could be put in irons; he wouldn't be, though—his labor was needed and no one could be spared to guard him.

What Garston had said, he meant: punishment would come when they'd returned to Earth.

Soon, then, he'd be disgraced. Ruined. Finished.

Everyone else on this First Expedition would become an authority on extra-stellar travel; everyone who wanted to could take subsequent trips, make a career of exploration. Knowing that in advance, Haines had fought for his place in the crew.

But now he'd go down as a misfit;

an eightball; a man who wouldn't do his share; a traitor to the rest of the team. No one would want him around.

No one wanted him now...

He glanced at the second painting, face up on the sand. It was almost obscured by blown dirt. The wind outside his suit must be getting quite strong, now that the sun was nearly down.

The first painting would be in even worse shape—he could see from where he stood that it directly faced the wind. And no doubt it was still as tacky as flypaper.

Flypaper. He felt all balled up in yards and yards of flypaper. Benzadrine drummed through his head, and fantasies of fatigue danced to the drums.

He wandered off from the work he'd sweated to accomplish, knowing it to be wrecked, feeling a kinship with all forms of wreckage, but irresistibly drawn toward the longest shadows now darkening the sand—those of the sandstone spires.

BLINDLY, Haines trudged—through sand that turned from yellowish red to yellowish black as he entered the shadows, from black to red as he emerged. Sometimes he stumbled down a draw, only to scramble up and out again. Occasionally he reached areas of bareness, where rocky outcroppings jabbed at his boots.

He didn't know where he was going, nor why. He was purposeless, directionless, unobserving—prodded by his overdose of benzadrine to unthinking restlessness, self-isolated by failure, self-deafened by the closed switches in his helmet. He stopped only when the never-used emergency signal, that could not be shut off, suddenly jarred him with its warning beep.

He switched on his transmitter-receiver, and heard Garston calling, "Haines? Haines? Haines? Come in, Haines! Come in, Haines!"

To leave this conflict-free solitude was like leaving the warm security of sleep. But Garston was as insistent as

a prodding mother. "Haines? Haines? Haines?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where are you?"

Haines stared vacantly around. "I don't know, sir; been wandering."

A groan. "All right, we'll find you. Keep your set open, hear? Keep your set open and don't wander any more—the men are tired enough."

He didn't doubt it. This would be the last straw—this unnecessary, exhausting chase at dusk, with the risk of being caught out on the cloud-canopied, moonless, totally dark, fear-somely strange planet. And all because the expedition eightball had wandered off, contrary to standing orders and plain common-sense.

"Never mind," he said. "I'll come back; track myself."

"You'll do what you're told! There'll be no tracks, on account of the wind."

"I've got emergency equipment," Haines argued. "I've taken too much benzadrine—that's why I wandered. But at least there's no chance I'll go to sleep on the way. Why not let me try to make it back alone, sir?"

"I don't care how much benzadrine you've had—stop arguing! I can't put off a search without taking a chance on having to do it in the dark. I won't have any wandering in the dark, because I want the group to return to Earth intact. I want no fatalities on this trip—and especially, no suicides. You can't make yourself a hero that way, Haines."

"No, sir."

"Set your automatic location-transmitter to 'on'. We'll take a bearing from the ship—I'm there now. But *stay where you are*, so the bearing will have some meaning when we come after you."

"Yes, sir."

SITTING in the sand, listening through his earphones for further instructions, Haines heard little but the sound of hoarse breathing. Three men were in the party, he decided—doubtless the two crewmen who'd

seemed least exhausted, and Garston himself. Between themselves, they spoke occasionally in monosyllabic grunts—to him they said nothing.

Too tired to talk, Haines decided. Too tired—and nothing pleasant to say, either. Certainly not to him. Yet all of them together could hardly hate him as much as he hated himself, just then.

Trying to make things easier for Garston he looked around for landmarks to describe. But the distorting shadows and yellowed, muted colors, made meaningful description difficult.

Anyhow, he couldn't see very far. He stood in a swale at the base of a variegated sandstone cliff. He couldn't see the cliff's top—within the limited area of his vision was nothing that might seem prominent from the route. An uncalled-for verbal description of the place would only produce confusion.

Yet he couldn't just sit there and wait. He was still over-stimulated from the drug, still possessed of the point-less urge to activity that had driven him into these shadows.

He ought to have brought his sketch-pad, Haines decided. Sketching would take the restlessness out of him. And overhead were now a couple of the large bird-things that hovered over the camp. Wryly he thought of them as his public, grinned at the need to disappoint them.

Come to think of it, he needn't disappoint them. There was plenty of sand here. The region was something like the Southwestern United States—and in the Southwest, he remembered, sand-painting had been the aboriginal vogue.

The deadening effect of dusk made useless any widespread search for the soft reds and yellows and browns of a Navaho painting. They wouldn't show in this light, even if he'd felt like going after them, in direct disobedience of orders.

But there was a stratum of crumbly white sandstone at the base of the cliff

fifty yards away. It would contrast well with the darkshadowed red sand under foot. He could make a design like the one in the worn black-and-white bedroom rug his grandfather had bought in some National Park.

GATHERING sand at the base of the weathered cliff was easy, but Haines found it hard to remember the design of the old rug. His mind seemed dominated by the present—obsessed with the guilty knowledge that he'd gotten himself lost. He felt compelled to do something about it. He decided that with his trained pictorial memory he might be able to make a map of his half-remembered wanderings—orient himself by reconstructing his route.

Beginning was easy. With the red sand smoothed to form a six-by-nine-foot frame, he started with the knoll, putting it at the right-hand, eastern edge of his map. He used relief—the knoll was a sculptured mound; the ship, a cone of weathered sandstone. Rocks represented the cliffs as seen from the knoll. Between knoll and cliffs, though, was a five-foot stretch of blankness.

Years of painting had given him the habit of thinking in pictures, and benzadrine now helped. He was able to remember a few half looked-at features that he'd passed along the way. But only a few.

He concentrated, his mind closed to the labored breathing of the search-party. Kneeling, eyes on the ground, he worked himself into an almost trance-like state, trying to remember, remember...

Crash! A sudden sharp blow on the helmet slammed his face-piece to the sand. Impact sounded like the crack of lightning; he lay prone a few seconds, unconsciously waiting for thunder.

The silence was more profound than before—he could hear nothing, not even the search-party.

With head hunched as close to his

shoulders as the helmet would allow, Haines looked up. Before his face, a rock rolled over and came spinning to rest.

Someone—something—had thrown that rock. Haines froze, staring at it, awaiting a second blow. Then, getting a grip on himself, he said into the throat-mike, "All right; now quit it, before you bust something."



The words sounded dead in his ears, as if the blow had deafened him.

Cautiously he felt over his helmet. The antenna was bent, some wires loosened. The rock had put his receiving equipment out of business. Transmitting, too, he decided.

He sat up and looked around for the men. They were not in sight. Slowly at first, but more and more anxiously, he searched with his eyes every visible foot of terrain—first the sandy rim of the swale, then the cliffs. Nothing! No one!

His eyes ranged higher—to the bird-things. As he watched, one swooped, let fall a rock, and soared away. The rock landed two feet from Haines—within the frame of his map.

A chill swept over him—a shivering coldness so intense that for a moment he thought the first rock had cracked his helmet, exposed him to the atmosphere, insured his immediate death.

His heart pounded. Sweat poured itchy down his back.

He couldn't scratch. Tormented, he threw himself face up on the sand to writhe within his armor.

That didn't help; it did, he suddenly realized, lay him open to further attacks from the birds.

Two of them, each bearing a rock the size of his head, swooped low,

braking their descent as if to insure accuracy. Then, with a flirt of scaly wingtips, each dropped his rock—within the area of the map.

They didn't seem scared, Haines decided. They could certainly have clipped him as he lay spread-eagled. Most likely they hadn't tried to. They must have aimed where they hit—at the map.

Slowly Haines got to his feet. Carefully, with an eye on the birds, he walked a hundred feet away, and sat on an outcropped ledge.

A bird landed in the middle of the map, scratched at it, stared at him warily with vulturous eyes, and soared away. Another bird brought down a small stone, set it within the map's frame, moved it a few inches to the right with a prehensile talon, shoved it a few inches to the left with a nudge from its reptilian head, and flapped away.

The number of birds circling overhead had increased. They were apparently trying to destroy the map, just as they'd tried to destroy the shack. Wondering why, Haines could only sit and watch, fighting to remain motionless so as not to frighten them off, tormented by itchings and a cramp that twisted like a knife-blade in his right thigh.

With increasing boldness the birds pecked at, clawed into, and dropped rocks on his map. With increasing insistence, his aches and pains demanded he shift his position. But even a single new fact, learned in the course of his stupid wanderings, might help repay the men who were struggling to reach him. Besides, Haines told himself, his flesh deserved a little mortification. He must sit still and watch—the more so for the very reason that the effort seemed a torture, and one that would never end.

It did end—and as suddenly as it had begun. With simultaneous jerks the grounded birds raised their heads, rotated them in complete circles, ran with clumsy steps into the wind, and

took off together. Watching them, hoping to get from their movements some clue to the cause of their flight, Haines nearly fainted when Garston tapped his shoulder.

CONFUSION followed: shouting and armwaving till the search-party got it through their heads that the damaged helmet prevented communication; a half hour of impatient sitting-still while young Milton, working without tools or spare parts, made emergency repairs. Meanwhile Haines got no opportunity to inspect his map, much less explain it to Garston.

But there wasn't any cross-examination. Instead, Garston came over to the ledge where Haines sat, and stretched out his hand to be shaken. "Congratulations, Haines," he said.

Sarcasm again! Disregarding it, Haines said, "I don't suppose it'll do any good, but I'd like to say I'm sorry to have brought you out here, like this."

"Well, if we hadn't come—and if we hadn't been able to observe the bird-things for a minute or two before they took flight—we might not have believed you. And after all, this is what we came for."

"What is?"

Garston looked at him searchingly. "You haven't seen for yourself?" he asked. "You don't know that the birds have made a perfect map of this area?"

Haines was dumbfounded. "Perfect? I thought they were wrecking it, the way they tried to wreck your shack..."

"Go and look. It's a beauty; your theory really worked!"

Puzzled, Haines got up and walked the hundred feet to the site. Within the frame he'd smoothed—while leaving knee and hand marks that the others must have seen—traced in rocks and pebbles and white sand, was a relief-map.

The camp, the knoll—the parts he knew best—were perfectly represented.

The swale and cliffs at his present location were recognizable. Of the many other details, he couldn't be sure, till Carno silently handed him an aerial photograph, taken before they'd landed.

The comparison was too close for coincidence. There was no doubt of it: the birds had completed the map he'd begun, applying knowledge of the terrain that he simply didn't have.

"What do you think now?" Garston asked gleefully.

"It looks like we've made contact with the natives, all right," Haines admitted slowly. "But I still think I owe you an apology. It was wrong of me to wander off, even if it did turn out all right. And then, my theory was haywire, because what made the contact wasn't Beauty, but a simple map that I got up more or less by accident."

"What the hell, boy," Milton said admiringly. "It worked!"

"But, Milt—it worked in reverse!" Haines insisted plaintively. "I set out to make contact by expressing myself in pictures, and wound up interesting the birds with a map. And a map, after all, is a bird's-eye view. I wanted to create something they'd recognize as the work of an intelligent mind, but came out with something *they* did, that shows *they're* intelligent. So you have to give the birds most of the credit for making this contact. It certainly wasn't *my* work—at best, it was cooperative..."

"Well, what did you expect?" Garston demanded. "Cooperation in the face of a brand-new situation is *the* hallmark of intelligent beings. But the way you talk, Haines, it certainly doesn't sound as if you want to be treated like a hero, as I promised."

"No, sir," said Haines promptly, "I don't. But what I do want," he went on, looking wistfully from Garston to the others, and back again into his boss' eyes, "what I do want, sir, is to be a member of your team."



A MODERN MERLIN

By L. Sprague de Camp

An article dealing with the borderlines
of science—pseudo-science and mys-
ticism.



THE many strange and sinister characters who flit batlike through the murky history of magic and occultism, one of the creepiest of modern times, Charles Webster Leadbeater, appeared upon this

earthly plane in the year 1847. Born into a well-connected English family, young Leadbeater (pronounced "led-better") was taken as a boy to South America, where his father—an engineer—directed the building of railroads. Young Leadbeater's talents, however, were soon seen to lie in the field of the supernatural rather than that of the technical; and on reaching manhood he took holy orders in the Church of England.

Although the first decade and a half of his priestly career passed peacefully enough—at least, the record is silent about any manifestation of those peculiarities for which he later became notorious—the life of an Anglican curate proved too tame for the budding magus. Hence Leadbeater was drawn first into Spiritualism and thence, by reading A. P. Sinnett's "Esoteric Budd-

hism", into Theosophy, then enjoying its first real vogue in England.

Sinnett—like Leadbeater, a class-conscious English gentleman—had lost his job as editor of an English-language newspaper in India as a result of the occult notoriety he had incurred by falling under the spell of the founder of Theosophy, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. This fat Russian hoyden, after a stormy youth as wife of a Russian general—and mistress successively of a Slovenian singer; an English businessman; a Russian baron; and an Armenian trader living in Philadelphia—had found her forte as the female successor to Cagliostro, and the other great charlatanic wizards of history. Mme. Blavatsky's Theosophy combined the tenets of Spiritualism, Kabbalism, and other forms of Western occultism, with a large and inaccurate smattering of Hindu and Buddhist mythology and philosophy—which the founder picked up in India, whither she and her partner, a shrewd American lawyer named Henry Steel Olcott, had moved from New York.

Sinnett, one of Madame's most illustrious converts in India, returned to England in 1883. There he wrote "Esoteric Buddhism", a statement of the tenets of Theosophy based upon

the "Mahatma letters" which Mme. Blavatsky composed and gave him, pretending that they had come from the Masters of the Great White Brotherhood—a committee of supernatural supermen living in Tibet, running the world thence by sending forth streams of occult forces and bustling about the earth in their astral bodies. Until eclipsed by Helena Blavatsky's "The Secret Doctrine", "Esoteric Buddhism" was the leading work in the Theosophical canon. Sinnett also became powerful in the London Theosophical Society, then captained by the handsome and well-educated mystic, Dr. Anna Bonus Kingsford, who claimed to be a reincarnation of Anne Boleyn, and to receive nocturnal visits from Mary Magdalene.

Leadbeater, becoming acquainted with Sinnett and his London Society, found all this occult activity exactly to his taste. When Mme. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott arrived in England, on a visit to strengthen their occult political fences, he threw up his priesthood to accompany Mme. Blavatsky back to India and spend the rest of his life as a full-time professional Theosophist.

This return to India took place somewhat suddenly as a result of the Coulomb scandal—or, as loyal Theosophists prefer to call it, the "Coulomb conspiracy". To keep her dupes bedazzled, Mme. Blavatsky, during her several years in India, had entertained them with magical miracles—as by having Mahatma letters (dislodged from a recess in the ceiling by a jerk of a thread in the hand of a confederate) fall upon visitors' heads; or exhibiting the phantom forms of Mahatmas gliding through the gardens at night. During the absence of H. P. B. (as Mme. Blavatsky liked to refer to herself), quarrels arose among the followers—as a result of which her chief confederates, a pair of beachcombers named Coulomb, were cast into outer darkness. They told the whole story of their fraudulent thaumaturgies to the anti-Theosophical Christian missionar-

ies of Madras, who published an expose in one of their periodicals.

WHEN A summary of the Coulomb charges was cabled to European newspapers, H. P. B. screamed forgery and persecution, and talked of retiring to Tibet. Olcott hurried back at once to India. H. P. B. followed at a more leisurely pace, accompanied by Leadbeater, then in his middle thirties and in the prime of his manhood—if you could call it that. He was an imposing, strongly-built man with a pointed beard, and a Mephistophelian look which did not altogether belie his nature; after the death of H. P. B. he became the evil genius of Theosophy. He also had with sadistic tendencies. Although it is said that he was sufficiently kind and considerate to his intimates, he took fiendish pleasure in dissecting, with a paper-knife, insects that crawled across his desk, or mercilessly berating, with his powerful bellow, servants or visitors who interrupted him at his occult contemplations. Solemn, irritable, loud-voiced, and snobbish, he was an extreme Tory, outspoken in his contempt of lesser breeds and lower classes.

When this queer individual arrived in India, the aging Olcott shipped him off to Ceylon to run a Buddhist-Theosophical school for boys there. And in Ceylon he sweltered unhappily for some years, while turmoil raged in the Theosophical world outside. Mme. Blavatsky's associates at the Theosophical headquarters at Adyar, India, forced her to return to Europe, where she wrote her "Secret Doctrine"; secured an unbreakable grip on the organization by creating secret inner-circle groups within the Theosophical Society, under her direct control and finally died in 1891, having designated the eloquent Annie Besant as her successor. Mrs. Besant, at 42 a small and still strikingly-beautiful brunette, had already experienced enough careers for three ordinary women as a professional crusader—for atheism, birth-control, and Socialism—before she became in-

terested in Spiritualism and then in Theosophy.

Meanwhile Leadbeater, sweating in Ceylon, begged so hard for a better post, that finally Olcott let him become tutor to Sinnett's son in England. Leadbeater, however, had become quite fond of one of his pupils, C. Jinarajadasa, and insisted upon bringing the boy to England—ostensibly on orders from the Mahatma Koot Hoomi. Although the snobbish Sinnett was not keen on harboring a "native", Leadbeater persisted, and Jinarajadasa proved a well-behaved guest. He grew up to be a Theosophical writer and lecturer, and is now president of the society.

Sinnett, who had become estranged from Mme. Blavatsky in her last years as a result of a long series of quarrels and perfidies, found the psychic Leadbeater a useful adjunct to his London Lodge of Theosophists, and made him a kind of magician-in-chief thereof. He was serving in this capacity when H. P. B.'s death precipitated a furious struggle for power among the Theosophical factions, from which Mrs. Besant and Olcott emerged victorious—not without major scandals and secessions. Annie Besant settled down to a formidable routine of organizing, administering, and globe-trotting, spending most of her summers in England and her winters in India. Becoming reconciled to Sinnett, she was captivated by his right-hand man, Leadbeater, on her next visit to England. Through his influence over Mrs. Besant, Leadbeater now really got into his stride as a person of importance in his own right.

BOTH WROTE voluminously on occult subjects, sometimes in collaboration, as in their "Occult Chemistry" and their "Thought Forms". In the former book they ascribed to atoms, as seen clairvoyantly by Leadbeater, shapes unknown to the material sciences.

The latter book exploited the old Kabbalistic belief in a series of "planes of existence" occupying the

same space as the one of which we are conscious, but not interfering with it. Whereas the Kabbalists had believed in four planes, the Theosophists—with characteristic exuberance—increased the number to seven. The lowest of the seven is the one we see. Next comes the Astral Plane, full of astral bodies that have come adrift from their owners (who are asleep, anesthetized, or dead); of elementals, demons, fairies, and other spirits; and of thought-forms. Clairvoyants and Theosophists, it is asserted, can see what is going on in the Astral Plane with their naked eyes.

Leadbeater, claiming this ability, left voluminous descriptions of the fauna of this plane. The different species of fairies, he said, are distinguished by their coloring: orange-and-purple and scarlet-and-gold in Sicily; black-and-white in the Dakotas; blue-and-yellow in Java, in all of which places he'd seen them with his own eyes. They tend flowers for a living.

Leadbeater's "thought-forms" are cloudy things thrown off by people's astral bodies when they think. According to this modern Merlin, thought-forms may cling to the auras of their creators, or fly to those at whom they are directed, or disintegrate. They can penetrate the auras only of those having similar vibrations. Hence a pure mind, possessing high-frequency vibrations only, is proof against the low-frequency thoughts of evil minds, which would merely bounce off a high-frequency aura and return to harm the sender.

Leadbeater's and Mrs. Besant's book, "Thought Forms", was lavishly illustrated with colored pictures of these entities. The authors explained that the qualities of a thought determine the color and shape of the thought-form. Hence a yellow blob with pink wings is "peace and protection"; while a conical blue form resembling a bunsen-burner flame is an "upward rush of devotion". A rust-colored form with hooks, "greed for drink", was observed over a toper en-

tering a bar. A brown-and-green snaky thing is "jealousy". One of the handsomest of all, seen hovering over a Theosophist at a funeral, resembled a carpet-tack having a green head (sympathy), a pink shank (love) with a yellow stripe (intellect), and a blue point (devotion) with a violet tip (idealism) whence streamed little golden stars (spiritual aspirations). The pattern is something for an enterprising fireworks-manufacturer to shoot for.

But alas! Leadbeater's thought-forms cannot be photographed. Now, in general, if something can be seen, it can also be photographed. This obtains vice versa since a camera is after all an artificial eye, operating on the same principles as a natural eye and taking pictures by means of the reactions between light-waves and the chemicals on the negative, just as you "see" by means of reactions between light-waves and the chemicals in your retina. Without such independent corroboration, thought-forms are reduced, by a judicious application of the rules of reasoning, to the phantasms of a habitually-hallucinated person.

Leadbeater not only recorded his visions of fairies, thought-forms, and atoms shaped like dunce-caps and corkscrews, but also visited the Theosophical Masters in spirit and described Koot Hoomi's Tibetan house—including its library, containing manuscripts written by Buddha and Jesus, its organ, and its typewriter. He explained that Lord Maitreya, the coming Buddha, is also the present Christ using a red-haired Keltic body. Maitreya's superior, Gautama Buddha, in turn reports to the King of the World, Sanat Kumara, who inhabits the form of a handsome youth in the invisible oasis of Shamballa in the Gobi Desert. (Shamballa is really the holy city of Tibetan legend, located in a vaguely northerly direction, and sometimes thought by Tibetans to be ruled by the legendary Gesar Khan, the Tibetan King Arthur.) The world's spiritual

hierarchy, it transpires, is as complex as that of a big corporation, and Leadbeater was a pal of all the executives.

Leadbeater's retro-history of mankind, compiled from the "Akashic" (Sanskrit for "etheric") record, was equally remarkable, being largely devoted to Leadbeater and his friends in their previous lives. Annie Besant, it seems, had a career as the daughter of Koot Hoomi and sister of Morya (another Mahatma) 600,000 years ago, the wife and the daughter of Morya, and at other times the son, husband, and son-in-law of Leadbeater.

UNFORTUNATELY for Theosophy, Leadbeater did not limit his activities to such innocuous researches into his own hallucinations. In 1905 he lectured and tutored the sons of rich Theosophists in the United States. Presently these parents complained that Leadbeater was teaching their children bad habits.

Olcott, still the President of the Theosophical Society at a vast age and length of beard, appointed a committee which called Leadbeater on the carpet in London. Leadbeater not only admitted the charges, but defiantly defended his course, affirming: "I sometimes advised it as a prophylactic... There was advice but there might have been a certain amount of indicative action." Showing the horror of normal sexual relationships sometimes found among homosexuals, he explained that complete chastity was necessary for occult development, and onanism helped to preserve it. Moreover, he averred, because of his own high spiritual attainments he could see the horrible thought-forms which adolescent boys gave off, when their lusts were aroused by visions of women, if they hadn't taken the precautions that he recommended.

He was allowed to resign from the society. Mrs. Besant for some time defended him by such curious arguments as that, being a reincarnation of Pythagoras, he naturally had the Greek attitude towards love. When the pressure of her associates became

severe, she disowned Leadbeater for his "insane" teachings and promised to readmit him to Theosophy only if a majority of the members asked it, and if he renounced his sex-teachings.

However, the sanctimonious Leadbeater soon insinuated himself back into her favor by guileful, humble, flattering letters, whereby he even persuaded her that her longtime associate Chakravarti—a learned Brahmin, who advised her on matters of Hindu lore—should be thrown over as an emissary of the Dark Powers. Mrs. Besant schemed to reinstate Leadbeater, despite her promises, because—being herself not at all psychic—she needed him for occult inspiration. The relations between them were like those between Olcott and H. P. B., except that in this case Annie, the woman, was the executive and Leadbeater, the man, the magician.

When Olcott died in 1907, and Mrs. Besant was elected president of the Theosophical Society, she produced a doubtful "death-bed statement" by Olcott, apologizing to Leadbeater. Two years later she forced Leadbeater's reinstatement, after inducing the American Theosophist Van Hook to issue a Mahatma letter (which he subsequently repudiated) stating: "No mistake was made by Mr. Leadbeater in the nature of the advice he gave his boys. No mistake was made in the way he gave it." To which Mrs. Besant significantly added: "The Theosophical Society has no moral code." There were the usual resignations—700 in England alone—but the Society survived them. Thereafter for many years Mrs. Besant and Leadbeater lived at Adyar, eulogizing each other as demigods.

UNDER Leadbeater's influence, the Theosophical Society took a direction quite different from that which prevailed in the time of H. P. B. Whereas Helena Blavatsky scorned ritualism, Leadbeater had a mania for it. The Society blossomed with subsidiary groups and fellow-traveller organizations, each with gaudier regalia

and more dramatic ritual than the last. There was the Order of Brothers of Service, for instance, who took monkish vows. The cornerstone of their community house at Adyar was laid on Buddha's birthday at 5:47 a.m. (an hour chosen by astrologers) with robed devotees singing Hindu psalms, incense, a "sacred fire", and Annie Besant making symbolic motions with a sword.

The outstanding Besant-Leadbeater project was the deification of Jiddu Krishnamurti, a son of the Brahmin clerk and minor Theosophical official G. Narayaniah Aiyer. In 1909 Leadbeater became attracted to the dreamy young Krishnamurti, then 14, and his younger brother Nityananda, and insisted upon educating them himself. By Mahatma messages he bullied the unwilling Narayaniah into letting Mrs. Besant become the children's guardian. When he and Mrs. Besant began to talk of the coming of the next World-Teacher, the successor to Zarathustra, Buddha, and Christ, it became evident that Krishnamurti was the lad they had in mind.

The chela (disciple) George Arundale founded the Order of the Rising Sun India (soon changed to the Order of the Star of the East) to pay homage to Krishnamurti. Members wore star-shaped badges. At an Indian Theosophical convention in 1911 Krishnamurti bestowed certificates of membership. Afterwards Mrs. Besant said that brilliant lights, a "dazzling flashing star", and a chorus of green angels had appeared over Krishnamurti's head. Such sights, however, must have been confined to those who like Leadbeater possessed astral vision, for others who attended saw only an embarrassed adolescent passing out pieces of paper.

Presently Narayaniah sued for the return of his sons, charging Leadbeater with corrupting them. Although Leadbeater denied improper acts, the judge decided that he was unfit to have charge of children, and ordered the boys returned. Annie appealed, and

lost again; then she appealed to the Privy Council in England. Her aristocratic friends there pulled wires, and Narayaniab—brown-skinned, obscure, and far away—had no chance. In a dramatic perversion of "British justice" the previous verdicts were reversed; the Brahmin was deprived of his sons and compelled to pay costs as well.

The expensive victory, however, cost Mrs. Besant the social status she had began to acquire among Anglo-Indians. Leadbeater was ferociously attacked by magazines, newspapers, and other Theosophical factions until he retired to Australia. There he lived most of the rest of his life, organizing occult societies, and having occasional trouble with the Sydney police on the usual charges of leading boys astray.

He continued, however, to travel occasionally and to labor upon the Krishnamurti cult. Krishnamurti was taken to England, where, for the next decade, Mrs. Besant's women friends worked at making a gentleman out of him. After a brief adventure in Indian nationalist politics during World War I, Mrs. Besant—with Leadbeater's long-distance help—went back to the cultivation of the Krishnamurti myths and the creation of clubs to promote it. By means of one of these, the Liberal Catholic Church, Leadbeater tried to capture the 20,000 old Catholics—a sect that had broken away from the Roman Catholic Church in the 1870's, over the doctrine of papal infallibility.

THE THEOSOPHIST Wedgwood persuaded an old Catholic bishop, Willoughby, to consecrate him bishop, and then went to Australia to lay hands on Leadbeater, who had discovered wonderful occult properties in the Apostolic Succession, notwithstanding H. P. B.'s blunt description of it as "a gross and palpable fraud." The Liberal Catholic Church thrived on a mixture of Catholic ritual and Theosophical theology until it was revealed as a club for abnormals, Willoughby hav-

ing been unfrocked for such activities by both the Anglican and the Old Catholic Churches.

After this fiasco, Mrs. Besant and Leadbeater sought other ways to build up Krishnamurti. Mrs. Besant bought him an estate at Ojai, California, and staged a series of great annual "camp-meetings" centering about the young Indian. Leadbeater took him traveling, and during the 1920's was detained, together with his protegee, at Ellis Island when they sought to enter the United States. Apparently they convinced the U.S. immigration officials that they had done nothing forbidden by *Leviticus*, for they were eventually let pass.

But Krishnamurti provided a surprise. As he matured he had shown less and less liking for the ecclesiastical machinery which was being prepared for his apotheosis. At a camp-meeting in the Netherlands in 1927, he revolted. He told his stunned disciples that rituals, ceremonies, dogmas, orders, and all the other mummeries were useless; that "No organization can lead a man to spirituality," and that everybody must find his own truth. To show his sincerity, he dissolved his Order of the Star, although Mrs. Besant had patiently built it up to 30,000 dues-paying members. He withdrew from Theosophy, and since then has spent most of his time at Ojai, still making occasional tours to address small "study groups" in various parts of the world with his find-your-own-truth message.

Krishnamurti's defection crushed Annie Besant, now in her eighties, since for the sake of his movement she had worked for nearly twenty years and had brought the Society through fierce squabbles and ruinous scisms. Thereafter she stayed close to Adyar, attempting no more stunts. Leadbeater moved back to Madras from Australia and, by exerting his old influence, got control of the Theosophical Society again through Annie Besant. In 1933, however, Mrs. Besant died peacefully, promising to reincarnate

immediately in a Hindu body to carry on her work. Leadbeater himself put the torch to her pyre. After her death, control of the T. S. passed to Arundale, who was elected president after a bitter dispute over the succession. Leadbeater lingered on at Madras for another year, an old man admired by a few Theosophists and detested by many both inside and outside the Society. Then he, too, died, aged 86.

Leadbeater in many ways typified the professional magician—using the term not to mean a mere conjurer, but one who pretends to the possession of real supernatural powers. In his arro-

gance, unscrupulousness, hallucinations, self-deception, and abnormality he furnished a fine sample of the breed; some of these qualities appear in the personalities of nearly all the great magi. The voluminous writings which he left behind him, while worse than worthless as a contribution to human knowledge, are fascinating as an example of the lurid by-ways into which the human mind can be led by an abnormally-developed imagination and an overconfidence in the reliability of one's own subjective convictions. We shall not soon see his like again—let's hope!

Readin' and Writhin' (continued from page 51)

with the bedplate. He gets Ann, Rick gets Karen, and a good time is had by all—even the reader, after he's waded through twenty thousand leagues of wheateana to get to the fun.

BEACHHEADS IN SPACE, Stories on a Theme in Science Fiction, edited by August Derleth. Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1952. 320 pp. \$3.95.

The theme is that of sentient beings, hostile or otherwise, beyond Earth's skies, and this volume is broken up into four parts: a prelude, an exploration section, an invasion section, and an epilogue.

As a prelude, we have David H. Keller's, "The Star." In the exploration section, you'll find "The Man From Outside", by Jack Williamson; "Beachhead", by Clifford D. Simak; "The Years Draw Nigh", by Lester del Rey; "Metamorphosite", by Eric Frank Russell; "The Ordeal of Professor Klein", by L. Sprague de Camp; and "Repetition", by A. E. Van Vogt. In the invasion department, we have "Breeds There a Man...", by Issac Asimov; "Meteor", by John Beyon Harris; "And The Walls Came Tumbling Down", by John Wyndham, "The Metamorphosis of Earth", by Clark Ashton Smith, and "The Ambassadors From Venus", by Kendall Foster Crossen. The epilogue, like the prelude, contains but one story; this one is "To People a New World", by Nelson Bond.

Of these thirteen stories, nine appeared in magazines between 1950 and 1952, and only two of them—those by Clark Ashton Smith and Nelson Bond—outside of well-

established science-fiction publications; there's a fair likelihood that anyone who has been following science-fiction for three years has read most, if not all, of the remaining seven recently-appearing tales. Of the remaining four, only one is outstanding: Eric Frank Russell's "Metamorphosite".

I think it should be obvious that the publishers, and Mr. Derleth, have not slanted their anthology toward veteran science-fiction readers, but to the general public, which hears more and more about this genre of literature daily. This attitude of presentation is surely a defensible one, and should be encouraged—so long as the resulting collection is one which you could recommend to an intelligent non-stf reader as good a sampling of the field. True, many fine stories continue to be by-passed by anthologists, often for no other reason than that the editor has never heard of them, or cannot find copies of the magazines containing them.

In the instance of the present volume, I see no need to discuss the stories; most readers of this magazine will be familiar with the bulk of them, and will know that, generally speaking, the selections are good ones—particularly the tales of Williamson, Asimov, and Russell.

Thus, I'd say that, unless you *haven't* already read a substantial number of the fresh-vintage tales or want to own these specimens in a well-made book, with thought-provoking introductions, the present volume is one to consider for recommendation to non-stf reading friends, or for gifts to same, rather than for your own bookshelf. On its own terms, I'd call it a success, RWL

Now, if there were such a thing as "time-travel", what about the havoc in the legal domain, when lawsuits were filed across centuries, against firms that didn't exist as yet?

"IF THE COURT PLEASES"

A Fantastic Novelet

by Noel Loomis

(illustrated by C. A. Murphy)



ROSS HUDSON dutifully poured a fresh glass of muscatel brandy for his father-in-law, Judge Butler. The Judge held the glass up to the fireplace, where an old-fashioned yellow-pine log was burning (none of these modern electronic fireplaces for him; they didn't smell like pine) and looked at it lovingly before he sipped.

Ross said politely, "Did you enjoy the sky-polo game last night, sir?"

The Judge looked up. "Never watch 'em," he said testily. "Too far away; all you can see is neon tail-lights like a bunch of fire-flies in the sky." He snorted. "The audience doesn't get the feel that it's a part of the game."

Ross didn't entirely agree, but out of expediency he did not answer; anyway, it didn't make any difference. He knew what was coming, so he listened to the Judge with one ear, while the other was alert for the footsteps of Sylvia as she went dutifully from room to room to look at her mother's new curtains. Ross liked the way Sylvia walked. It was almost as much fun hearing her as seeing her, because there was a cleanness in the way she lifted and set down her feet, a crispness that was very like her and made her vivid to his mind. (They had been married a year and ten months.)

But the Judge was delivering his sylabus: "There never has been a game like good old-fashioned baseball."

"No, sir," Ross agreed absently. He thought Sylvia and her mother had crossed the hall and were on their way back down the other side.

"I remember back in 1924—that was forty years ago this fall—when I saw the most dramatic moment in all the history of sports," the Judge proclaimed, settling back in his chair. "New York and Washington had won three games each in the World Series. In the seventh game, Washington made one run in the first half of the twelfth inning. New York came to bat and got the tying run on base; then they got the winning run on third."

"The Washington pitcher was weakening. The next batter fouled two, and then got three straight balls. They yanked the pitcher and put in old Walter Johnson, who was supposed to be through in the big leagues."

The Judge sat up straight. "Look at it: last half of the twelfth inning; two men out; two men on. The fate of a World Series depends on one pitch—and Washington has only old Walter Johnson to send in." He paused and sipped his sweet brandy, with the flickering log fire making ruddy shadows on his heavy-jowled face.

"What happened?" Ross asked automatically, and waited for the answer that always came.



It was the crucial moment of the 1924 World Series.

"He struck 'im out," the judge said, with a little flourish of the glass, and paused a moment. "I would give ten years of my life," he said impressively, "to re-live that moment."

Which wasn't a particularly generous offer, Ross thought, for the Judge was white-haired and at an age where the insurance-companies' experience tables weren't too reliable.

"Maybe you can see it again," Ross suggested, "if all this talk of time-travel materializes."

"Bah," said the Judge. "Reminds me of television back in the forties—only they'll *never* travel in time. It isn't logical. Think what it would do to our judicial procedure. Imagine deciding a case on precedents that have not been established."

Then Sylvia came in, and Ross felt warmed all over. Whatever else the Judge's faults were, Ross could forgive him because of Sylvia.

"By the way," said the Judge as Ross started to get up, "that was a very nice case you presented in court

Monday."

Ross sat down again and said hopefully, "Thank you, sir."

"Too bad," said the Judge, "that I have had to decide against you."

Ross swallowed hard. "Against me, sir? I thought—"

THE JUDGE cleared his throat vigorously. "There was that little matter of shifting the burden of proof on a fraud action. Your own pleadings tripped you up."

"I had considered that," Ross said, "but I did not believe it pertinent."

"Everything," the Judge said unctuously, "is pertinent to the trial of a case."

"Also," Ross insisted, "it was a very close point—and its materiality was hardly justifiable. Neither side considered it—in the arguments—and I did not suppose you would make any particular effort to pass on it." Ross was speaking very conservatively. He felt like saying there was no sense in dragging that point out of the gutter.

The Judge set his glass down and wagged a long finger at Ross. "This court," he admonished, "never side-steps anything." He paused and then went on, "Too bad it had to be you, but you know how it is; I wouldn't want anybody to accuse me of partiality because you married my daughter."

"I know," said Ross, wearily.

"Look here, my boy," said the Judge as Sylvia came up and touched Ross' shoulder, "you aren't taking it hard, are you? After all, what's one case? Why, I lost hundreds before I went on the bench."

Ross' voice was unemotional when he answered, "I didn't mean to convey that impression."

Sylvia looked at Ross and said, "I think we'd better go home." She spoke to her father. "Ross has been working on a brief and he looks tired."

They said goodnight and got a taxi. It went up to the 700-foot level and cut across the Hudson toward their suburban plot that was only one fourth paid for.

Sylvia held Ross' hand. "Why did you act so strange with the Judge tonight, Ross? What is that case he decided against you?"

Ross looked away. "No, not that—exactly."

"Tell me about it," she urged.

"Well, I suppose I might as well. I don't hold it against your father, really. He makes the decisions according to his own lights—but I *do* wish he wouldn't go out of his way to find reasons for deciding against me. It's well-known in the bar association that he's so afraid of being accused of partiality, he leans over backward to decide against me. It's so well-known that no other lawyer ever offers an objection to appearing against me before the Judge."

"Maybe it's just the breaks," Sylvia said soothingly.

"No," said Ross shortly. "As a matter of fact, I've never won a case in federal court before your father."

Sylvia thought for a moment. Then she said, "Can't you ask for a different judge or something?"

"And file a certificate of prejudice against my own father-in-law?"

She squeezed his hand. Presently, she said, "Don't worry, dear; something will turn up."

Suddenly his reserve seemed to weaken. He said, with the first trace of bitterness that he had known in years, "It already has."

She looked up quickly. "How?" she asked.

HE DREW a deep breath. "Well, you know how it is down at the firm. I started with Burnquist, Stalland, Crawhall & Lathrop five years ago. Harold Ferguson and I headed our class and so we were picked. It's an old firm and a very good one, and they wanted new blood. Burnquist will retire next month."

"Then you'll get promoted to a full partner," she said, excited.

"No," he said slowly; "not now. You see, the point on which the Judge decided against me Monday—without argument by either side, because neither side anticipated it—was one on which Ferguson was basing an important case; and the Judge's decision was adverse to him."

"But it can be argued again, can't it?"

"It can, but it's a close one; and in such a case the precedent set by the previous decision will have a lot of weight."

She looked at him and there was a tiny crease between her deep blue eyes. "You mean they won't let you be a partner because of that?"

"It's worse than that," he blurted. "Burnquist has asked me to resign!"

She stared at him, then gasped. Presently she straightened up. "You can get in with any firm you choose," she said; "you just—"

He shook his head sadly. "Not as long as your father is federal judge."

She was thoughtful for a moment.

"What will we do? It took all we made to keep up our payments on the house?"

"I don't know," he said with a deep sigh. "I wish I did. It would be just as hard if we went to some other town. They'd look up my record." He shook his head soberly. "I guess the truth is that there are too many lawyers. If one stumbles along the way, a dozen rush in to take his place—and then he's lost his momentum."

"Maybe you can specialize in something and make a spot for yourself," she suggested.

He shook his head, wearily now. "Everybody specializes; there's no new field." He patted her blonde hair, glossy under the krypton lights. "I hate to say this, baby, but we're in a mess."

She sat up. "I'll have a talk with father," she announced.

Ross sat up too. "Whatever you do," he ordered, "don't try to bring pressure on the Judge. He's a stubborn old goat as it is; if anybody ever tried to influence him, he'd certainly do just the opposite."

She stiffened. "You called my father a stubborn old goat," she said incredulously.

But Ross only sighed. "I was very kind," he said firmly.

Sylvia was quiet. Ross, when he let down, felt pretty glum.

2



THE NEXT day was Saturday; Ross wrote a check for the monthly payment on the house, and in the late afternoon went out to dig up the iris roots. Sylvia came out after a while, and they worked

side by side, neither one talking. Of course there was security in 1964, but no guarantee of luxuries. Ross

kept thinking about their little house, that wandered over the center of five acres, among trees and along the picture-book creek where Ross could catch enough brook trout for their supper.

They'd spent a lot of time planning and more time working. In fact, the house was a member of their family, and presently they planned to have four children to be brought up there. But the house was still heavily mortgaged, for a junior partner in a law firm didn't get the best cases; and nobody knew better than Ross that the home-finance companies were not taking any chances with defaults on homes like theirs. One payment missed, and—powie! He snapped his fingers.

Sylvia knocked the dirt from a bunch of roots and looked at him. "That's what I was thinking," she said slowly. "And then where would the children play?"

He looked down at her and smiled. "Maybe—"

But she said in a low voice, "Ross, look at that strange man walking up the drive."

Ross shook the dirt from his hands and stood up. The approaching stranger was tall, and he walked lightly. He wore shorts of an odd, softly gleaming material, and a queer jacket-affair that looked like a short-sleeved polo shirt with the bottom unraveled almost up to his neck. His skin, a good deal of which was visible, had a warm, bronze, healthy look.

Ross went to the front gate set in a white picket fence. He met the man there, and the man said, "Ross Hudson?"

"Yes, sir." Ross had an uncomfortable feeling.

"You are a lawyer?"

"Yes."

"A member of the bar of this state?"

"Yes." Sylvia came up behind him.

"Admitted to practice in all state and federal courts?"

"As far as I know," Ross said cautiously, and reached reassuringly for Sylvia's hand.

"I'm Jephre Tayt," the stranger said, and smiled. His smile was engaging. "I represent the Gibraltar Surety and Indemnity Corporation."

"Yes?" said Ross. He shook hands, and introduced the stranger to Sylvia, who then went reluctantly back to the irides, while Ross tried in vain to place the Gibraltar Surety.

"Now," said Tayt, "you have recently been connected with a very strong firm here in town, I understand."

Ross was startled. "Recently," Tayt had said—but old Burnquist had suggested he resign only that evening, after all the others were gone, and nobody else knew but Sylvia—and Mr. Tayt. "Yes," Ross said after a small pause.

"May I ask your plans?" said Tayt. "Are you going in with another firm?"

"I suppose I'll have to," Ross said slowly. "In these days, a man would starve if he tried to go on his own. The big firms have all the good business pretty thoroughly zipped up."

The stranger looked at him intently. "Before you do that," he said, "I am empowered to offer you a retainer to represent us independently in an action to be brought soon."

Ross opened his eyes wide. "Come in," he said, "and tell me about it."

THE STRANGER walked in. He was quite tall, and Ross wondered if he was on one of the sky-polo teams. He accepted a daiquiri with the remark that "You people have such delicious beverages."

Ross was puzzled. Tayt had made a couple of odd remarks. Ross led him to the rock garden, and they sat in the shade where Ross could watch Sylvia working with the iris.

"Afraid I can't tell you too much until I know whether you will accept our case," said Tayt. "But I can say this: We underwrote a warranty for

the Everlasting Paint Company on two hundred million dollars worth of paint furnished by them to the Channel Construction, Ltd., for use on a steel bridge. Now—"

"Two hundred *million*?" asked Ross, frowning.

Tayt smiled. "It was very unusual paint, as you will see if you accept the case. I can only say further that Channel Construction is suing us on the warranty contract, since the Everlasting Paint Company is no longer in business."



"It's queer," said Ross. "With business of that volume, I should recognize those names. But I don't—except for the paint company—and they were doing business a few weeks ago, I am sure."

Tayt watched him steadily. "I am prepared to offer you a thousand-dollar retainer, with the understanding that this case is acceptable to you—and I can tell you now that there is no reason why an ethical lawyer cannot handle it, if he is willing to prosecute a point of law that is entirely new to the courts."

"You mean a major point that has not been ruled on?"

"That is true. You will find no precedent whatever in the past. What do you say, Mr. Hudson?"

Ross considered for a moment. "Providing there is nothing unethical or absurd," he said, "I will take your case." In fact, as he watched the forlorn actions of Sylvia—as if she had no expectation of seeing the iris bloom there again—he guessed he wouldn't be too fussy about ethics.

Oddly enough, Tayt counted out the retainer in hundred-dollar bills instead of offering a check. Ross wrote out a receipt and a retainer-

agreement. Tayt said, "When can you see me again, Mr. Hudson?"

"Any time," said Ross.

"Tomorrow?"

"Certainly."

"I'll be here at the same time, shall we say? Goodbye."

"Goodbye." Ross stared after him, wondering what it was that seemed so strange. Then, when Tayt stepped into the taxi out at the road, Ross stared down at the bills in his hand. He picked Sylvia up and tossed her into the air. When he caught her he grunted. "I guess I'm getting weaker as I get older."

"No," she said. "I'm putting on weight—in various places."

He stood off and appraised her playfully. "In the right places," he amended.

Then she saw the money in his hand and gasped....

THEY CELEBRATED that night, because they had enough money for three or four months. Ross awoke at noon the next day with a fuzziness around his brain. He had hardly finished shaving, it seemed, when the door-chimes announced Tayt. He waded through the Sunday paper on the floor of the long, low living-room and asked Tayt in. They went to the library, where Sylvia brought them coffee.

"Now," said Tayt, opening a big brief-case, "I'll outline the case for you. In the year 2235 Channel Construction, Ltd., a temporary merger of all the big companies of Europe, undertook the contract for a bridge across the English Channel. In the course of construction, they made a contract with Everlasting in New York for the paint, which Everlasting guaranteed to protect the bridge from erosion for five hundred years. We, as surety-people, underwrote the guarantee. Then in the year 2011 an atom-pile-projected interplanetary craft crashed into the bridge. The power-plant exploded and destroyed a section or so. Somebody else—Aetna,

I think—held the insurance, and agreed to replace the damaged spans. But they discovered that the power-plant of the aircraft, which had been in contact with the bridge when it exploded, had in some manner impregnated the entire bridge with radioactivity. While this was not enough to prevent use of the bridge, it did cause deterioration of the paint. By the year 2200, the paint began to crack; and in 2235 Channel Construction sued us for the amount of the guarantee—Everlasting having been liquidated previously. As I say—"

Suddenly Ross came up out of his daze. "Did you say 2235?" he asked.

Tayt raised his eyebrows and nodded. "I will—"

But Ross held up his hand. "Just a moment." He went into the kitchen and came back with a bottle of bourbon and two glasses. He poured a glass for Tayt and one for himself. He killed his own and poured another. Then he sat down again and drew a deep breath. "Now," he said, "away with the double-talk; just tell me what you want me to do."

Tayt smiled. "It's a surprise, isn't it, Mr. Hudson?"

"What's a surprise?" demanded Ross.

"That we of 2235 are using time-travel in business. But you see, Channel Construction figured it was a lot cheaper to go back into time to get the bridge built; things are so high in our day, you know. I believe the records show that the work was actually performed about five years from now—or started at that time, rather. But they had to go up to 1994 to get the right paint; then they came back to 1968 for the underwriting to take advantage of lower rates. Our laws require, of course, that such companies have a representative in our time, and that is why I am—"

ROSS GURGLED, and quietly collapsed in a heap. When he came

to, Tayt was helping himself to another drink.

Tayt smiled at him and said, "Perhaps you realize now why I picked you. We need a smart, open-minded attorney; and all the conservative, established firms turned me down cold. In fact, I spent three days in Bellevue, under observation, before I learned my lesson. They—"

"Hold on a minute," said Ross, suddenly alert. "Did you come here from Bellevue?"

"Yes."

"Sorry, Mr. Tayt; very sorry. I'll return your money now and we'll call the whole thing off."

Tayt said pleadingly, "Please, Mr. Hudson." Then he shook his head. "I cannot understand why the legal profession is so delightfully stupid. It's a little discouraging."

Ross was opening his wallet. Then, to his horror, he realized that he had already spent over a hundred dollars of his retainer. It was hard to believe, but then orchids and champagne—he closed the wallet. After all, it was legitimate; he would go far enough to earn his retainer, anyway....

But when Tayt came the next time, Ross began to wonder. On the fourth visit he began to ask questions; and by the fifth visit he was half-convinced that temporal translation was a fact. It had become a fact in the year 2200, with development of magnetic currents and their application. In plain words, Man could travel backward in time but not forward, and some enterprising men of 2235 had been quietly utilizing the idea to commercial advantage. Now, it seemed, with two hundred million dollars at stake, it had to come into the open, and they had picked Ross to represent them in 1964.

Ross' brows were continually furrowed in those days. He accepted service from Channel Construction from the year 2235 in the name of

Gibraltar; and to be on the safe side he filed counter-suit against Everlasting in 1964, which was at that time a small company.

"It will be the first inter-temporal case ever tried in court," he told Sylvia, "and we must not overlook anything. The decision in this case will establish a precedent for time-travel cases for all time."

Sylvia accepted the facts of time without too much rebellion. In her opinion, the retainer fee was eloquent.

Ross was served with an answer on behalf of the paint company by Harold Ferguson, and he swallowed hard when he saw that the firm's new letterhead said Stalland, Crawhall, Lathrop & Ferguson. It made him feel bad for a while. But the case was set for trial in district court, and Ross got busy in the public law library. He ran into Stalland down there one day and spoke to him. Stalland spoke shortly and turned away. That hurt.

3



ROSS DIDN'T quite understand it, but his information was brought up to date two days later, when a registered letter came. "It's from the bar association," Sylvia said wonderingly.

Ross opened it gingerly. It wasn't time for dues—and anyway, why was the bar association sending him a registered letter?

He read it aloud. "*Complaint has been filed against you for professional practices unbecoming to the dignity of the bench,*" he said slowly. "*You are hereby notified that hearing has been set for December 12.*"

He let the notice drop from suddenly-numb fingers. "It's a disbarment action," he said harshly, "for taking part in a time-travel case. There are a lot of people who still

believe time-travel is something that occurs only in fiction; they don't understand it, so they want to get it out of their sight."

"If they disbar you," Sylvia said slowly, "that means you can't practice law any more, doesn't it?"

"It does," Ross said grimly.

"What will you do now?" she asked.

"For one thing, I'll have to hire a lawyer to defend me. I don't dare defend myself, for then if I overlooked something, I'd have no recourse. You know the old one about the lawyer who defends himself?"

"No," said Sylvia, her eyes round.

"He has a fool for a client."

Sylvia didn't laugh, and Ross got serious. They had just enough money to last until about the time of the trial of the Gibraltar case—which was set for the last week in November—so Ross didn't dare to hire a lawyer to defend him in the disbarment action. He couldn't ask for more money from Gibraltar until after the trial; so the best he could do was wait until then and hope for a break. Certainly he wouldn't ask any reputable lawyer to defend him without a retainer, and nobody came forward and offered to. The entire legal profession of the city was leaving him very much alone.

"Just because time-travel is something new," he complained to Sylvia, "they refuse to admit its reality. They're afraid of it, so they close their eyes and pretend it doesn't exist. And they'll punish anybody who disturbs their little dream-world."

"What will you do if you are disbarred?" asked Sylvia.

Ross shook his head. "I don't know anything but law. If I can't practice—well, I don't know. There isn't any common labor any more, and all the skilled men belong to unions—which limit memberships to their own apprentices. I don't know," he said, looking grimly at the weeping-willow trees along the creek. "I really don't know."...

TAYT HAD promised to send him some legal help. On Friday before the last week in November, Ross was out painting the white picket fence when he heard a steady clanking sound come up the drive. He looked—and then he stared; a robot was coming up the drive.

Ross had seen robots on exhibition; this one looked very much like the others, except that it was six feet tall and very thin. Ross looked for wires, then for a power aerial, but saw neither. The robot drew up with a little final series of clankings and said, "Mr. Hudson?" in a deep, beautiful basso.

Ross jumped. Then he swallowed and said, "Yes, sir. That is—yes."

"I'm Smibob," said the lovely bass voice; "I have been assigned to help you on the Gibraltar case."

There were few things that could astound Ross any more; he was merely astonished at the appearance of Smibob. He took him around to the back where Sylvia was fussing with a trellis, doing her part in the little game they were playing to pretend they had no thought of giving up their small estate.

"How do you do?" she said quite calmly to Smibob, and Ross was relieved. After all, he had figured, a wife had a right to draw the line somewhere—but he was glad Sylvia hadn't reached that point yet.

They put Smibob up for the night, though he assured them he never slept. When he had nothing to do, and didn't want to disturb others, he said, he merely turned himself to low power and stood somewhere out of the way....

It was a little disconcerting the next morning, eating their eggs and toast and talking to Smibob, who stood in the doorway rather than trust his four hundred pounds of steel and copper to an ordinary chair.

Ross tried to be cheerful. "I hope they let us both in court," he said between bites.

On Monday morning they went to

district court. Ross waited in and took a seat at the big table. Smibob clanked in and sat behind him. The heavy chair squeaked but it held.

The court came to order. The judge came out in his robes, sat down, and picked up his pen. "All right," he said.

Ross felt tight inside, as he always did at the beginning of a case. A lot of things could happen in a court-room—and they frequently did. Ross looked around, and was astonished to see the spectators' seats completely filled, and many observers were standing. He was more astonished when he realized the spectators all were lawyers. He recognized Crawhall and Lathrop. Then he saw the elderly Stalland at the opposite table with Harold Ferguson. He saw the president of the bar association, retired Judge Gardner, in the spectators' seats. He saw the bailiff bringing in a third table, and then a tall man dressed like Jephre Tayt came in to take his place at the table, followed by a robot. Now even Ross opened his eyes wider.

THE NEW man from 2235 stood up. "Your Honor," he said clearly, "I represent Channel Construction, Ltd., as fourth vice-president in charge of legal affairs. I am not a member of this bar, your Honor, but Channel Construction's attorney in 1964 withdrew at the last moment and we have been unable to obtain a substitute; therefore I claim the privilege of an individual to plead his own case before the bar."

Harold Ferguson offered no objection. Ross started to object but thought better. "All right," said the judge. "Enter your appearance for the record."

"Tommas Cammel, assisted by Phrankus."

The judge scowled but carefully refrained from looking at the robot. "Is Phrankus the last name?"

"It is the entire name, your Honor," said Cammel.

His Honor made notes in his big book. He looked at Ross and Harold Ferguson. "I take it," he said to Ross, "that you are appearing on your own behalf—and Mr. Ferguson in behalf of his firm."

"Yes," said Ross for himself.

Harold Ferguson was on his feet. He was light-haired and his hair was receding in front. He was a little too heavy in the waist for a young man, thought Ross. Ferguson said, "Your Honor, as intervenors we contend this court has no jurisdiction over this case; these men claim to be from another time-stream." He allowed himself a subdued snicker. "In that case we claim diversity of citizenship."

Ross leaped to his feet. "Your Honor, I object!" He couldn't talk fast enough. If there was one thing he didn't want, it was to go into federal court and argue this case before his father-in-law. "If the court please," he began, "both parties to this action have attorneys-in-fact resident in this state, empowered to accept service and to represent their clients in all necessary ways. We see no need—"

Ferguson interrupted. "But these parties are not from the same so-called time-stream, your Honor. Channel Construction will not be organized until 2232; while Gibraltar Surety and Indemnity Corporation, represented by Mr. Hudson, will not be incorporated until 1966—two years from now, your Honor."

Ross said, "I have been retained as counsel by Gibraltar, your Honor, and accepted service from Channel Construction in good faith; am I to be denied the right to serve my client?"

Smibob stirred then. He got to his full height with a certain amount of clanking, and then his deep voice said respectfully: "Your Honor, may I be heard?"

The judge took a deep breath, scowled, and said, "I suppose you may."

"Your Honor," Smibob said gently, "I realize this is a most unusual case and this point we are arguing is

entirely without precedent—in your time."

He paused and looked at Ross. "I hope counsel will forgive me. It has not been possible to acquaint him with the law reports beyond his own time as yet; but I find I am compelled, as



a duty to the court, to quote from the first volume of Edlund's *"Establishment of Jurisdiction in Temporal Translation Causes."* The quotation, at page 48, section 7, is from a decision by the Supreme Court of the United States; opinion by Garson, Chief Justice: *"The Court feels incumbent upon it the responsibility of taking judicial notice of temporal translation, or time-travel, as it is more often called. The adequate discharge of our judicial responsibility requires that we accept jurisdiction over a situation that a generation ago would have been classified as a fairy-tale."* This decision is dated, your Honor, December 7, 1967."

Ross sank lower. Smibob's melodious, softly-resonant voice ended. He looked at Ross and shook his steel head, as if he was puzzled and grieved. He said in a husky whisper, "May I suggest, counsel, that we accept the intervenor's suggestion and transfer our cause to the federal courts?"

Ross nodded. He said, "Yes," but it was hardly more than a croak. He turned to stare at Ferguson, who was grinning ghoulishly.

The damage had been done and Ross subsided gloomily. Who did

Smibob think he was, anyway? Obviously it was part of his job to get the case into federal court—but he didn't know Ross' father-in-law.

IT WAS the next day when the district judge made his decision. "It is the belief of the court that the doctrine of diversity of citizenship applies to residents of different so-called time-streams, as it would if the litigants were residents of separate states. This action should have been brought in federal court, and since plaintiff is entitled to his day in court, the case is dismissed without prejudice."

Ferguson was grinning in his best I-have-just-eaten-a-mouse manner. Ross' skin got cold and clammy.

That evening he explained to Smibob why he had resisted the idea of going into federal court. He didn't like to do it, because Smibob might report to Tayt and Ross might lose his client; but to his great relief Smibob smiled gently and said, "Don't worry. The main thing is to establish a precedent. We have a lot of surprises for the intervenor yet."

Ross was about to ask, "What about the plaintiff?" but Sylvia called supper and Ross went out to wash. Smibob was sitting at the table with them, though of course he didn't eat; he merely sat and talked to them in his musical voice that reminded Ross of a bull fiddle.

The next day Ross was served with notice to appear in federal court. He went at once to the court clerk's office and filed an affidavit, stating that he had to face a disbarment proceeding in two weeks and asking for advanced hearing, that he might fulfill his duty to his client.

His request was granted; the following Monday he was in court. The federal court-room was bigger, but it also was packed, and the hall outside was filled with lawyers. Ross and Smibob pushed through the buzzing crowd and took their places.

Ross dreaded this. In fact, he cringed when Judge Butler, white-haired and a little pompous, came into the court-room.

The case got under way. Cammel and Phrankus were by no means ignorant of the law. All parties stood on their pleadings, and a brief was offered by the bar association as *amicus curiae*.

MR. BURNQUIST represented the bar association, and he made an opening statement. "Your Honor," he said, "it is with admitted embarrassment that I appear here against a former member of my firm, who now seeks to make light of our courts and ridicule our orderly processes of justice. Obviously, there can be no such thing as time-travel. It is a logical absurdity, and I strongly urge the court not to upset the governmental system of our country by taking judicial notice of these antics. These strange people here"—he glanced at the two robots—"are circus-trappings brought in to mock our venerable courts of law."

Ross was startled. He had hardly anticipated that anybody would question the validity of Smibob. He had gotten so used to Smibob that the robot was like one of the family.

There was only one course. He jumped to his feet and addressed the judge. "If the court please—"

But the Judge waved him down. It was a bad omen; the judge didn't seem to be in a good humor; perhaps he hadn't had his brandy the night before. At any rate, he said without looking at Ross, "The court has carefully considered this question and has come to the conclusion that these tactics should be brought into open court and aired once and for all. It must never be breathed that justice is a mockery, even to those who mock it."

Ross sank down as if he had been hit over the head.

He knew now, from the judge's words and the way he managed to

look at the entire court-room without looking at Ross, that the judge was highly displeased with him.

Cammel presented his case, offering the contract with Everlasting and the surety bond by Gibraltar.

Ferguson took his turn and said it was Everlasting's position that no evidence had been or could be presented because Everlasting did not exist in 2235.

Ross' turn came the second day. It struck him that it was odd, his arguing that the court had jurisdiction, when he could probably win his first case before the Judge by joining Ferguson's position; but Smibob had said they wanted a precedent established, and that meant—since the case was bound to be tried some day—they wanted it tried in 1964. So Ross argued the merits of Channel Construction's claim for damages.

At the end of the first week Ross felt sorry for the judge. At that time it was only a week until the beginning of Ross' disbarment proceeding, but temporarily Ross didn't worry too much about it as he sympathized with the judge. For even if the judge accepted time-travel as a legal fact, how could he rule any way at all? How could you award damages to a firm, that would not exist for two hundred years, from another firm that would furnish paint ten years from now for a bridge that wasn't built yet? The only solid fact was that Everlasting was a paint company in 1964.

The more Ross thought about it, the more involved it became. What if Channel Construction should get a verdict for a couple of hundred million? Yes, what if? Ross quit laboring his tired brain and sympathized deeply with the judge.

But over the week-end he quit sympathizing, for the judge had let drop a remark on "much ado about nothing," and Ross interpreted that as a strong indication of the trend of the judicial mind.

4



ROSS WAS awake most of the night. Endlessly he turned over in his mind the apparently insoluble angles of the case. The poor judge!

But when Ross got up the next morning he had a desperate idea. He

drank two cups of coffee and went into conference with Smibob. The robot disappeared shortly afterward; and for the first time in over a week Ross and Sylvia ate breakfast out from under the watchful eyes of the robot. "If father could only have Smibob around the house for a week," she said, "he wouldn't be doubtful about anything. That robot is just like one of the family."

"Don't take that too literally," Ross warned.

She smiled. "Would you be jealous of a robot?"

"I'd be jealous of anybody who attracts you." He grinned. "We're talking about Smibob as if he were a person."

A moment later she asked, "Did you make the December payment?"

"Yes," he said, looking at his plate, "but it didn't leave any Christmas money."

"That's not important," she said.

Ross made a trip to the Smithsonian Institute and was back by noon. He insisted that they should celebrate that night, but it was a gloomy celebration; they went home before midnight.

Smibob returned Sunday morning with a black box that Ross could not even lift, and a big coil of insulated wire. When they appeared in court Monday morning, the robot carried the box and the wire into the courtroom.

Court opened; the judge came in.

Ross decided his Honor was again in a bad mood. Ross recognized the storm-warnings, and he was glad Smibob had brought the box. Ferguson read the signs, too, and began to look very happy.

The Judge looked through Ross. "Has the defendant Gibraltar company anything more to say?" he asked.

Ross was on his feet. "Your Honor, one of the important questions in this case is whether or not time-travel shall be recognized as a judicial fact."

"Is that a question?" the Judge growled, and Ross flinched, almost visibly. But he went on, "If your Honor please, I have arranged a small demonstration. My assistant, Smibob, will demonstrate—"

"I object!" cried Ferguson, and the crowded court-room buzzed for a moment. Ferguson got his breath. "This so-called robot has no appearance entered. He is not a member of the bar. Defendant Gibraltar is adequately represented by Counsel, and has waived the privilege of offering testimony; we submit that the robot has no right to appear in this proceeding."

"If your Honor please!" Ross drew a deep breath. The operation of the black box was highly technical, and only Smibob understood it. Ross said, "Your Honor, Smibob is a member of the bar in 2235, and he—"

"I object!" roared Ferguson, as the court-room buzzed. "How could a robot possibly be a member of the bar?"

Ross argued, "Smibob can easily prove his competence at the bench, your Honor. He can, for instance, quote at will from any statute or any law report ever written in any civilized language." Ross was desperate; he knew how flimsy was his position, but there was a chance.

The judge opened his mouth to say, "Sustained," then he looked at Smibob and frowned. "This is not a bar-examination," he said sarcastically. "It

is my opinion that Smibob, being a robot—" He paused.

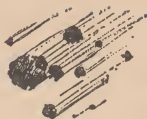
Ross played his high card. "If your Honor wishes," he said, forcing himself to maintain a poker-face although he knew he would lose everything if the bluff failed, "if your Honor feels it advisable to pass over the question of Smibob's right to appear in this court—"

"This court never evades a legitimate question!" thundered the Judge.

Ross wanted to grin at Ferguson but he didn't dare; he had too far to go yet. He said to the Judge, "Your Honor, I invite you to test him." And he repeated, "Smibob can quote verbatim from any citation used in courts of law, by section or page number."

THE JUDGE glared at Ross, and in his eyes came a light that had made strong men quail. He whispered to the bailiff. The bailiff disappeared in the judge's chambers, and presently returned with a dusty volume. The judge opened it at random and then looked up triumphantly. "I have here the sixteenth volume of Fletcher on *Corporations*. It is open at Section 7956. Can Mr. Smibob give me the gist of Fletcher's statement pertaining to receiverships?"

Ross swallowed. He looked around at Smibob and his knees went weak and he sat down suddenly. The tall robot appeared not to have heard; then, with the court-room still, Ross heard faint clicks and whirrings. Smibob arose and said in his beautiful basso voice, "Your Honor, I quote verbatim: *'A determination as to what are deemed operating expenses during the receivership is governed by a different rule from the one applicable to what constitutes current expenses prior to the receivership.'*" Smibob paused. "Shall I go further, your Honor?" he said in his magnificent voice.



of a brief glance at the stricken face of Harold Ferguson, then he turned to the judge. His Honor was plainly flabbergasted. He perused the lines in the book and then drew a deep breath and snapped it shut. "Proceed with your demonstration," he ordered. "But I warn you—if there is any monkey-business, I shall try you both for contempt."

Ross felt sick, but Smibob said, "Thank you, your Honor," and set the heavy black box on the table and opened it. Then he started around the court-room with the coil of wire, paying it out, as his steel feet, propelled by four hundred pounds of machinery, thudded on the floor.

"The entire court-room," Ross announced, "will be included in this demonstration." He watched Smibob finish the wire-laying and connect the two ends to the black box. "Your Honor may remember," Ross began bravely, "that forty years ago there was a dramatic World Series game played between Washington and New York." It was satisfying, at least, to see the judge's head shoot up.

"Your Honor," Ross went on, "this is the city of Washington, D. C., and we are not far from the site of the last game in that series." Then Ross crossed his fingers and told a little fib. "I have chosen that event to demonstrate time-travel, because many of the members of the bar here present were also present at that game." Ross motioned to Smibob. The robot turned a switch. The black box hummed. The room began to darken, and Ross announced in a stentorian voice, "Gentlemen, the World Series!"

Ross permitted himself the luxury

IT WAS REAL. The crowd was huge. Venders were running up and down the seats, hoarsely calling hot-dogs, popcorn, soda-pop, and souvenirs. But everybody else was silent, for out on the diamond the pitcher was winding up. The scoreboard showed the last half of the twelfth inning. The score was: New York 3, Washington 3.

Muddy Ruel was taking a lead off of third base. Walter Johnson—the one and only Walter, the Big Train—was on first. He had a little lead, but he was playing them close. This was the last game of the Series; the big, tall, gangling farmer with the abnormally long arms—now thirty-six years old—who had won nearly four hundred games from Washington since 1907, and who had waited eighteen years to pitch a World Series game, had within a week lost the only two Series games he ever pitched. And after all that, after his fast ball had lost its blinding speed, and the fans said he was too old to pitch, Bucky Harris had put him in the eighth inning of this final game to try to bring Washington a pennant in its first World Series.

Johnson was on first, and McNeely was batting.

Jack Bentley delivered the pitch. McNeely swung and fouled; forty thousand Washington fans groaned. Ruel danced off third. Bentley got a new ball and wound up again. McNeely screwed his feet into the dirt and waited.

Ross wasn't there in the park, though he seemed to see the entire scene with omniscient eyes. Some effect of the translation machine, Smibob had told him. Ross could see the judge in a box right behind the plate, with—Ross' eyes bulged—that was old man Burnquist with him.

The judge was a great deal younger; in fact, he probably had just been graduated from law-school, and Ross wondered where he'd gotten the price of a box-seat at the Series.

Bentley threw the ball. There was

an instant's hush. McNeely swung; it was another foul. The ball went up and up. The catcher ran back. The crowd sucked in its breath. The ball started down. It was coming down right over the judge's box. The judge jumped up; he stuck one hand through a hole in the meshes of the wire screen. The ball came down in his open hand with a loud smack. The judge held onto it, then Burnquist helped him. They worked the ball back through the screen and the judge dropped it in his pocket just as one of the ball-park policemen came down to see what was happening.

Then they sat down and watched McNeely knock a grounder over Lindstrom's head, so Ruel could score and end the series....

THE LIGHT grew; they were back in the court-room. The judge was sitting up on the bench. He reached under his robes and cautiously felt in his coat-pocket. Then amazement spread over his face. He looked at Burnquist and they both looked guilty. The judge cleared his throat and banged with his gavel. "If Mr. Smibob will gather up his apparatus," the judge said, "we will proceed with the case." Then he added the dynamic clincher: "The court takes judicial notice of time-travel." ...



It was three days later that the telephone rang. Ross had just finished remarking that it was lonesome without Smibob, and Sylvia was clearing away their late-breakfast dishes. Ross answered the phone. A few minutes later he yelled, "We won! We won the case! I'm to prepare the findings." He hugged Sylvia exuberantly. "The judge is pretty foxy, though. He has decided that the Everlasting Company has to make the loss good, but *not until it occurs*." He swung her around. "What do you think of that? Nobody loses."

Presently he calmed down. Sylvia straightened her house-dress. "It was all nice and crisp," she said poutingly, and then turned her lips up, "—but do it again."

The doorbell rang. It was Jephre Tayt; he was beaming already. "Very good news," he said when Ross told him about the findings.

But Ross suddenly sobered. "Come to think of it, I don't guess we won the case after all. If Everlasting should go out of business before the judgment takes effect, then Gibraltar will have to make it good."

"Everlasting won't go out of business," Tayt assured him. "That's the best part. I can let you in on a secret now. I couldn't tell you this before, because then it would have seemed like collusion, but all that the three companies in 2235 wanted was to secure judicial recognition of time-travel, so that commerce and industry in 2235 would be assured of recognition and protection in your courts in 1964 and later."

"That's fine," said Ross, "but the Supreme Court probably will overrule the judge."

TAYT SMILED and squeezed Ross' shoulder. "My boy, that decision Smibob quoted by the Supreme Court taking judicial notice of time-travel was delivered in passing on this very case. You see, we knew it would end that way all the time—but we had to start it. Now," he said, bringing out a heavy envelope, "I have here a retainer-agreement, by which Channel Construction and its associates will pay you five hundred a month for the next five years to represent them."

Sylvia squealed. Ross gasped. "But—"

"You're a big man today," said Tayt. "Do you realize you're the *only* time-travel expert in this century? You've made yourself a specialist in one stroke. You've got a head-start on the profession. In a word, you're an authority, and it pleases me—"

"Look." Ross felt miserable. He hated to do this, with Sylvia listening, but he had to. "I can't accept that retainer, I've got to appear Monday in a disbarment proceeding; I'll have to wait—"

"Oh, that," said Tayt. "I saw Burnquist, and he promised to withdraw the complaint. He was as much impressed as was the Judge. You'll get a registered letter tomorrow."

Ross sat down weakly. But he got up, for Tayt was saying goodbye. "Smibob told me to give you both his regards. Says he misses your cozy little breakfast chats."

"We miss him," said Ross.

Tayt left the heavy envelope. And presently Ross, somewhat dazed, went for a walk in the garden with Sylvia. The first snow was drifting down on their trees.

"It's all ours," Ross said with a great feeling of satisfaction. "We'll get it paid for now."

She squeezed his arm. "Father was just simply thrilled to pieces to get that baseball. The best part of it, and the thing that really convinced him, was that he said the ball was the real kind they used back in 1924, and not the later ball that was built with more 'hop,' he called it. Mother says he holds it in his hand and looks at it all the time and tells her about some of the games he saw when he was young."

"I'm very thankful," said Ross, "that he didn't notice the difference between the real game and the way he remembered it."

Sylvia looked at him curiously. "Then what's worrying you, dear?"

He swallowed. "That baseball," he said. "That foul ball wasn't a part of the original game. It was Smibob's idea. I don't know just how he worked it, but it was perfect. The thing that bothers me now is—how am I going to get that baseball back to the Smithsonian Institute?"

HOW MUCH OF YOUR WAGE PACKET



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QUICKLY WITH THE "APAL"
AID OF **APAL**

One of the first effects of conquering the smoking habit is that you realise you have more money in your pocket to spend on more vital things. Next, you notice a marked improvement in your health. The remedy for the tobacco habit is in your hands. With the aid of "APAL"—the imitation cigarette which you never light—you can stop smoking immediately, because inside the "APAL" is a crystallised compound. When you draw on it you get a pleasant, cool taste on your palate that satisfies the desire and eliminates the craving for a smoke.

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Dear Sirs,

My reaction is, that since I had my APAL two months ago, I have not had one cigarette, and I am now free of the smoking habit, I never think about them now.

F. H., Mansfield, Notts.

Dear Sirs,

This is my third week without a cigarette, thanks to APAL. I definitely feel that the battle has been won. I was an exceptionally heavy smoker, and was very doubtful if you could cure me. I suffer extremely with stomach trouble, but since giving up smoking my health with regards to this complaint has improved enormously.

Mrs. A. D. R., Stanmore, Middx.

Dear Sirs,

About five or six weeks ago I wrote to you asking for an APAL which I received almost immediately afterwards. It is an amazing cure because it makes one hate the taste and smell of a cigarette. I had a cigarette a week after I had been using it a week, but threw it away after two draws as the taste was repulsive to me.

O. A. E., Lytham, Lancs.

Dear Sirs,

I promised I would let you know how my son is progressing with the APAL. It is now five months since he received it, and he has not smoked since. He can be among lots of pals who are smoking and it has no effect whatsoever upon him.

S. H., Aberdeen.

Dear Sirs,

I thank you very much indeed for your wonderful cure of smoking. APAL did in one week what I have tried to do for years.

D. G. D., Ebbw Vale, Mon.

Dear Sir,

I had my APAL three weeks ago, and since then I have not wanted to smoke. My friend saw mine and now wants me to write and get one for him.

S. K., West Kingsdown, Kent.

Dear Sir,

I am very pleased with the APAL. I am down from 20 cigarettes to one per day. I did not believe in it at first, it was my husband who insisted I send for one, and I am very glad I did, it is really marvellous.

Mrs. E. G. H., New Cross, S.E. 14.

Send a stamped and addressed envelope for full particulars, free advice, and proof:

HEALTH CULTURE ASSOCIATION

(Room 133), 245, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1

Books make people think, and it's well-known that taking thought often makes the thinker sad. So, in the Era of Happiness, books were prohibited; and the watchword was

NEVER TRUST AN INTELLECTUAL

A Dynamic "First" by Raymond E. Banks

(illustrated by C. A. Murphy)



WANDERED into Jackson's book bar to have a short one before dinner. That's what I like about being single—if you want to go out for a little vice before dinner, there's no one to stop you.

The usual crew of degenerates were there. Oddballs all of them, sitting at the bar or at the little tables reading. In the Era of Happiness, since electronic devices have replaced the printed word, you have to be careful about reading—I've known cases where a man's lost his job, his wife and his material possessions, just spending all of his time in book bars. But as the editor of *Listener's Digest*, I suspect that my vice is rather tolerated—at least my weakness for books is well-known around town and often hinted at in gossip-columns.

And then I saw this woman—

Eddie had a stricken look on his face. The other regulars were all watching me, shifting uncomfortably at the bar. Instead of the usual anti-social silence, there was a quiet buzz. Every eye in the room was on me—except hers.

I looked up at my special shelf behind the bar. There was a big gap in

the line of books, between Gibbon's "Decline And Fall" and the "Complete Shakespeare." Eddie, the booktender, was white in the face. A small blond chap with a quiet, firm manner, he is never at loss for words. Tonight he swallowed and stammered, "Good—good evening, Mr. Martin."

I felt the blood rush to my head. "Where's my 'War And Peace'?" I said harshly.

"She—the woman over there—she—"

I turned and looked. The woman went on quietly reading. She wore thick glasses; there were cigarette-ashes on her tailored severe suit. She was dressed all right, and looked all right, but her face had a pallor. I mean a real pallor. When you see my face, I'm ashamed to admit, you can tell that I spend more time in bookbars than is safe in the Era of Happiness; but hers was a superior pallor, indeed.

A knife of anger cut into me. I had meant to savor a little Mark Twain before supper, because I don't like to go in for heavy reading on an empty stomach. I turned my anger on Eddie.

"What's the big idea in serving her 'War And Peace' off my shelf?"

"Mr. Martin—" stammered Eddie, "the books belong to the bar. If a customer can afford to pay—I can't stop her. It's only that nobody ever



My mysterious woman from the bar jerked open the aircar door, and leaped in beside me.

comes in here who can stomach the vintage you read, that's the only reason I got a special shelf for you."

"Those are men's books," I said a little foolishly.

Eddie shrugged.

"There is no book-bar in New York that carries weighty vintage like Jackson's," I said in a rather loud voice, "and there is no man or woman alive who can outread George Martin. I've put the best under the table—"

Bragging, perhaps, but I was mad. There was only silence to this belligerent statement—the soft rustle of historical novels and mysteries from the average patrons, and the sharp flick of a comic-book that a pimply-faced college kid was reading at the end of the bar. That showed how rattled Eddie was, serving an underage kid, obviously on his first bookdrunk.

"We know your terrific capacities, Mr. Martin," Eddie soothed me.

"You ain't seen nothing yet," I said. "Hand me that Henry James. The 'Golden Bowl'."

There was a flurry at that. The customers bent to whisper to each other.

Eddie seemed to turn even paler. "Henry James—'Golden Bowl'? Mr. Martin, I run a decent bookbar. I don't like the idea—"

I snapped my fingers at him and he scurried and got it. I laid a ten dollar bill on the bar and carried it off.

A bookdrunk with bloodshot eyes watched me with bulging eyes. "The legendary 'Golden Bowl'," he muttered to his half-asleep girl friend, "the one that separates the men from the boys. It is said that anyone who can get through it can read anything that was ever written by anyone, anywhere, any time."

I SAT DOWN at my favorite table, across from the girl who was reading "War and Peace". She looked up now.

For the first time, I got a shock. The eyes were lost, gone, dead. I've seen plenty of eyes of bookdrunks in

my time, and my own have a bit of that look. But this woman really had it. There was a second of eye-meeting, and suddenly she stirred from her deep concentration.

"Juvenile stuff," she muttered looking at my book. She went on back to her volume, setting up the speed of her page-turner.

The patrons gasped at her audacity; they knew my reputation: I had been challenged. I set my lips; I opened to page one, set the automatic page-turner and began to read.

I should've been smart; I should've known something was up. I read against the girl for less than half an hour and then a small, thin man wearing glasses came into the bar, bought a rental on "Wuthering Heights" and sat at my table. Nobody paid any attention. His lips moved, but lots of readers do that.

"Today we got those 1500 PP's," he said to me in a voice nobody else could hear. "I stashed 'em in your aircar, boss."

I felt a sinking sensation. I have always been careful to keep my illegal bookselling apart from my life as editor of the *Listener's Digest*.

"You what! Dammit, man—"

"The heat's on, boss. I think it's the Anti-Book Squad; I was tailed from New Jersey."

"So you dumped the evidence in my aircar!"

Carlin, who is an ex-professor, having been convicted as an intellectual, shrugged; he isn't a very smart Distributor. "You're the boss. You take over. Me—I got to get back to New Jersey tonight. There's a secret cell-meeting of Great Books. We're reading Plato, and I got to get back to New Jersey."

"Professor Carlin—"

But he got up and smiled apologetically and went out. He didn't care much for the dollars-and-cents danger of jockeying around fifteen hundred copies of John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress."

The woman's eyes flicked over me curiously. I felt my nerves tingling. I had just run off fifteen hundred copies of "Pilgrim's Progress" over in New Jersey; and at twenty dollars a book, that was thirty-thousand dollars for me—money I badly needed, considering my editor's salary. I had to keep and sell those books, but the Anti-Book Squad of the Happiness Police was on our trail. And my New Jersey gang of intellectuals had turned chicken on me and dumped the whole load in my lap—or rather my aircar. And then walked out. Never trust an intellectual!

I had places to go; I had things to do. If Carlin was scared enough to take-off back to New Jersey that meant the Anti-Book cops weren't far behind. And if they followed Carlin to the parking lot—1500 copies of John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" aren't easy to hide.

Then I got another thought that scared me even more. My eyes met those fanatical ones of my lady-opponent and I remembered the stories about Doris Dixon of the Anti-Book Squad. No one ever saw her picture; no one knew how she operated. But she had cleaned up the Columbia Gang, and the Princeton Gang, and there was just the chance she was going after the smaller-fry book-peddlers. And I was definitely smaller fry worth getting, with 1500 illegal PP's on my hands.

I GOT UP and paid and left in a hurry. The customers jeered at me for quitting, but the inside of my palms sweated and I was jeer-proof.

Outside, I mopped my brow when I saw my aircar. Carlin had been in a hurry, jamming the entire shipment in the rear seat and trunk, barely covering the mess with a blanket. I looked around, saw some Happiness Police patrolling, and hoped that Carlin had left by the back way. I started. The aircar handled like a truck. I flew to the street entrance trying to dial on

NEVER TRUST AN INTELLECTUAL

my carphone with one hand. I needed to get in touch with my Uptown Distributor, and my Broadway Distributor, in a hurry; but just then I didn't place those calls.

There was a flurry, and my mysterious woman from the bar jerked open the aircar door and leaped in beside me. I got a whiff of gingery perfume and the serious, owl eyes stared into mine.

"Just a minute—"

"Excuse me, madam. I am in no mood for a pickup; I have a dinner-date with my boss."

She flipped back the blanket in the back and turned to me. "What do you know," she said in precise, clipped tones. "Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress'. Tch-tch—the old-time morality!"

"Just helping a friend. Now madam—"

"Quite definitely illegal," she said, flashing a small gold badge.

We rode into the noise and burley of New York streets. Great gashes of color filled the canyons. Animated ads poured colored fury down on the crowds. Gregarious, social, happy New York bubbled and fumed around us.

Ahead of us at eye-level was a sign. One of those "before-and-after" things. First, it showed a lonesome, unhappy nude woman; the second picture showed the woman partially dressed in a *Girlcups* bra. She was happy, surrounded by men, a success. There was an aerial view of the retail outlets below—no words, no words at all. The thing that fascinated me about the sign was that in its reflection I could see two big guys following us in another aircar. Plainclothes? I sweated.

"I need not tell you," she said, "that reading books is anti-social. It leads to withdrawal, conflicting ideas and permanent memories. I need not tell you that, for centuries, mankind suffered from printed-word permanent memories. I need not tell you that the only legal form of communication in the Era of Happiness is electronic devices with automatic fade-outs. Nor

that the few legal books are rented in licensed bookbars by licensed operators..."

"You need not," I said.

"In other words, my friend," she smiled coldly. "Let's see the license for these books."

"Sorry. Some other time. Listen, sister, I don't know who you are, but I happen to be editor of the *Listener's Digest*, the greatest electronic magazine in America. And I happen to be on my way to dinner with my publisher, Mr. Beecher Riley, in Plain Folks, New York. I got a way to go, and I'm late; so if you'll kindly step out at the next traffic-light..."

"The license, please."

I studied her face. She looked like an intellectual all right. Thin, pale cheeks, with nice gaunt hollows, the big eyes, the brown hair, the thin body. Her legs were quite good...

"The amusing thing," I said, "is that despite your tin badge, I doubt if you're a cop. I need not tell you that it's an old trick of book-peddlers to hijack their fellow-intellectuals' books on the cop pretense. I've heard that the Congress gang is active again, and Old Jack Congress had a habit of hi-jacking books. Now he's dead, but—he had a daughter."

"The man's a goldmine of information," she said opening her purse.

"If you're a cop, you'd blow a whistle."

She grinned at me and pulled out a silver police whistle.

"Mr. Martin," she said, "even the editor of the *Listener's Digest* can get into deep trouble if he breaks the laws of the Era of Happiness."

She never got a chance to use that whistle. There is one infallible test to determine the difference between a Happiness cop, female, and an intellectual book hi-jacker, female: a kiss. In this anti-neurotic age, a Happiness woman had a built-in response; the new morality insists on freedom in love. But a true intellectual, following the old morality, has to be coaxed.

I had my girl by the head and was kissing the make-up-less mouth. Glasses and all. Her lips were warm and wet—and reluctant; she pulled away.

"Cop," I jeered. I flung open the aircar door and got my foot against her trim buttocks and shoved her out. I zoomed away, leaving her sprawling on the walking level, and saw the aircar that followed me stop to pick her up.

CARLIN had been taken in. Apparently our New Jersey printer wasn't to be trusted, and he had been bribed by the new Congress gang to reveal our print-job.

I headed uptown. It was true that I had to go to dinner with Beecher Riley, my publisher, but I had to do something about the books first. If that girl was Betty Congress, old Jack Congress' daughter. I had trouble. Jack Congress was a rugged intellectual, and he grew a rugged family. He was a Ph. D in a world where they didn't go for book education. He had peddled the forbidden, unabridged "Webster's Dictionary" all his life, despite a dozen jail terms. He hated the Era of Happiness but he kept the intellectual mobs in line; and the Columbia and Princeton mobs were offshoots of the old Congress gang.

And his daughter? She might tell the cops and get me arrested for anti-social activity; or she and her toughs might run me down and grab my books. At least, she would do *something* because she was Jack Congress' daughter, and he was the only boy who ever knocked out a Happiness Cop by slapping him with a comic-book. Or so the legend said.

I couldn't reach my uptown Distributor on the carphone. But then it was Saturday night, and that's a semi-holiday in the Era of Happiness. I floated up Broadway and stopped at Nard's. Nard's was a little tobacco-shop squeezed in between a sidewalk health juices and liquor-bar (Don't think—drink) and an all-night theatre (Beds

—women—your favorite prejudices catered to). I studied the pictorial slogans on these establishments as I waited for Nard and watched the scurrying, happy New Yorkers, lit by the glaring lights, faces excited and eager, buying electronic papers and magazines and jamming down into the subway entrances. As they always had been—and always would be—they were on the move, in a hurry, fulfilling themselves in terms of the semantical happiness that was the highwater mark of the age. Everywhere clever pictures, suave colors, happy, well-dressed people and nary a printed word to be seen—even the stores showed prices by the symbol of the bills and coins—and I drew comfort from the guileless faces, pulling back only when I saw the lean, hungry intellectual look on an occasional passer-by.

NARD CAME out and I told him what I wanted. He had a frowsy-looking blonde with him, and I guessed it was a husband-wife holiday which was what took him so long to open the darkened shop.

"My Lord, George," he said. "I can't take 1500 copies of 'Pilgrim's Progress'! I haven't got room. I can't sell that many."

The blonde giggled and pinched my arm; she smelled of gin. "The old morality," she winked.

"You can keep them for tonight," I said, pulling away from his blonde, who was practically falling on me in her unsteadiness.

"Well, I'll look and see if I can stack 'em in the back," he said doubtfully. He was a thin, worried-looking man with a big family; he carried on lots of anti-social rackets in order to make ends meet. He dived back into the tiny store's interior.

The blonde breathed gin at me. "I've never met a real intellectual before," she said; "do you carry a gun?"

I poked the soft ribs with my fingers

in my coat and she tittered. "Wait till I tell the girls at the Church of the Big Laugh," she said. "A real intellectual."

"You must be from Iowa," I said.

"Oh, yes," her eyes were serious. "Back there we only have the husband-wife holiday once a year—not every month, like in the big city. Most of the time I go to the Church of the Big Laugh. Our rector is a real comedian of the Hope Cult. We used to have a Benny man—and before that a Groucho—but back there we like the Hope humor best."

"A great comedian," I said piously. I have learned to conceal my anti-social lack of a sense of humor. I was studying the crowd; I was watching for the police and for Betty Congress and her hoodlums; I didn't feel much like talking. The blonde caught my serious mood.

"Life is big, isn't it," she philosophized, staring out on the New York streets. She began to hum the Happiness Hymn: "*To work, forgetting the higher salaries of others; to play, forgetting the world's worries; to procreate, forgetting the ancient morality; to eat, forgetting the better foods of others; to sleep, forgetting all, all, all—*"

It would've helped if she could sing. In self-defense, I reached into my pocket and pulled out the hand-sized metal package of the *Listener's Digest*. "Have you seen the latest?" I asked her. I shoved the plug-end into Nard's counter cigar lighter. The tiny motor whirled and the pictures sprang onto the wall and began to peel off smoothly as the sound came on. She clapped her hands.

"Why that one isn't even out yet!" she cried, recognizing the November issue from the Thanksgiving turkey on the cover. "You New Yorkers—you really live. Wait'll I tell the girls back in Iowa—"

Then her mouth got big as the image of contents reader appeared and be-

gan tabulating the table of contents. "Handsome," she murmured, squeezing my hand.

I flicked through the blur of color pictures to the story on Brambles, South Dakota; I suspected that it would please her. It seemed there was a blind dog in this small town that always carried the black bag of the country doctor in his teeth. Day or night, rain or shine, out went the doctor and the dog with him carrying the heavy black bag. Then the old doctor died. A new doctor came to Brambles. But he smelled differently from the old doctor, and the blind dog couldn't follow him at all. Seems that he always ended up at the wrong house with the doctor's heavy bag in his teeth and the doctor came to the right one without his black bag. Consternation!

"Until," said the low, trembly voice of our best sobsisster, "the brave citizens of Brambles got together—and bought the new doctor a bag of sawdust shavings soaked in creosote. Ever after the blind dog could follow his doctor with the black bag in his teeth, sweet and true."

Up came the music, and the blonde sighed and dashed a tear from her eye. "Wonderful," she breathed. "Creosote; Lord, that's wonderful!" She grinned at me happily, a tear running down her cheek, and I got a twinge thinking how little it takes to make some people happy.

I heard a wrong sound from the back. Too many feet. I jerked alert and took off for the door, just as Betty Congress and one of her hoodlums came rushing out from the rear of the store. Her man had a gun.

"Get him!" cried Betty, her thick glasses flashing in the colored gobs of light coming from the street. The man raced around the counter and right into the arms of the blonde.

"Have you seen the November *Listener's Digest*!" cried the blonde. "I mean the creosote story—"

There was a crash as she went down

with the man, and I didn't hear any more. I hit my aircar running, and dragged away just in time to shake off the strong fingers of the determined female who tried to throw herself aboard my aircar.

I headed up Broadway and out of town fast. I hated to leave Nard, but I couldn't help it; all I could do was chaperone my payload of almost thirty-thousand dollars in books and hope for the best. Later I could make it up to him....

BEECHER RILEY has one of the finest mansions in Plain Folks, New York, a city of mansions. Once a month I report to him to see what drivel he especially wants for the magazine. Usually he only has some new article-announcer that he's been entertaining to be hired for a couple of months. He claims that it really works, too.

"Get a woman in a position like that," he says, "and you'll really find out if she has a sincere voice."

It may be so. I follow the old-fashioned morality myself; I wouldn't know.

As usual for Saturday night he had a collection of New York characters wandering around his big house. "Got a great idea," he said, slapping my shoulder and forcing a drink in my hand. "Come here; I want you to meet somebody."

He dragged me over to meet a pretty girl with chestnut hair. She was a real beauty, with a clear skin and fancily-dressed in a velvet gown.

"Meet Doris Dixon," he said, "Head of the Anti-Book Squad, Happiness Police."

She gave me a dazzling smile. With 1500 illegal copies of 'Pilgrim's Progress' in my aircar outside, my own look was slightly stunned.

"I've heard much of you," breathed Doris, giving me the look that Happiness women do.

"And I of you," I murmured.

"Not that his hands are clean,"

yipped Beecher in his jovial manner. His round face beamed. "George goes to bookbars all the time."

"I get to quite a few myself," murmured Doris, green eyes cold and cruel.

"He's the boy to watch!" cried Beecher. "Why I'll bet if you searched is aircar right this minute, you'd find a dozen illegal books."

"Is that true?" she said grimly. My heart froze.

"If I went in for illegal books," I parried. "I wouldn't bother with a dozen. I'd put fifteen hundred copies of 'Pilgrim's Progress' in my aircar."

They both laughed. "Let's see," said Doris, "that would get you about one hundred years in jail."

My laugh at this great joke didn't sound real.

"I want you two to get together on an article for the March number," said Beecher. "It's a great idea, George. A story on Doris Dixon—'Smashing The High-School Book Peddlers' Ring!'"

"Name the day," I said, starting to walk away.

She grabbed my hand. "Now," she said. "Tonight. The old Congress mob is active again, and I'm going to be busy next week."

"Get on it, George," ordered Beecher, moving off; "we've got deadlines to think of."

The girl led me to the door. She was the kind of woman that always knew what she wanted and did it. "We'll go to my apartment in town and hole up for the week-end, and do the article," she said.

"Your husband mind?" I gulped.

"Which one?" she asked absently. "I've been married four times." The cool, green eyes looked me over as if she were measuring my week-end powers.

"I like intellectual-looking boys," she went on. (She was ten years younger than I). "My father was one. We lived in poverty all my life, and I hate intellectual habits, but I like their looks; figure that one."



SHE HAD my arm in a death-grip as we walked to the parking lot, and I was trying to figure whether it would be worse to go to jail for a hundred years or spend the week-end with this greedy female. Like all of the old-fashioned kind, I like to do my own chasing.

"We could get rid of the menace of reading in a few years if we could raise a generation who'd never seen a book," she said. "Books are the only blot on world happiness; that's why I give myself to your magazine in spite of my limited time."

"Oh, I don't know," I said. "It seems to me—"

"Things!" she flashed at me. "The great semanticist dream. A word's no good unless it stands for a thing on the non-verbal level. Our revered semanticists who began the Era of Happiness taught us that. They were right! No abstract ideas. Things you can feel, touch, see, and smell—"

Her lips brushed my ear in her fervor. I felt my knees tremble, because after all she was dressed in a velvet gown and she had it.

She swayed against me in the moonlight, wetting her lips. "Come, let's go sit in your aircar," she said. "We can talk up the article!"

I was stuck. If I balked, it was a violation of the new morality; but if she saw that shipment—

"I'd rather not," I said; "it isn't comfortable."

"Boy," she said sternly, "when I get going, comfort will be the farthest thing from your mind!"

At that moment I stumbled over a rock and let out a cry. (The events weren't related.) "Somebody is stealing my aircar!" The Betty Congress mob had tailed me all the way out. Now I could see her two hoodlums prying open the aircar door, while Betty stood there with a gun. She turned her head and I saw her thick glasses gleam in the moonlight.

"Intellectuals, by the Lord!" breathed Doris. I could've sworn that there was no room between the tight-fitting velvet dress and the suave body to hide a gun, but Doris had one all right. It was strapped just above her knee where the dress flared. There was a flash of silken leg and then the air rocked with her exploding gun. Betty began shooting at the same time.

It was a very unequal situation. Doris dropped the two hoodlums with two shots and they folded: Betty, with her lousy vision, was shooting at a tree off to our right.

Then it was woman against woman with Doris drawing a bead on Betty. The gleaming glasses made a perfect target.

"Watch!" cried Doris. "Right between the eyes!"

Betty was ineffectually spraying a hedge off to our left with her ill-aimed shots.

That was the moment that I stooped, found the rock which I had stumbled over, and hit Doris smack on top of the rich, chestnut head. She folded.

Betty was out of bullets. I chased her, but with her eyesight she walked right in the fish-pond. I brought her back to my sleeping Venus, firmly holding her arm.

"That," I said, pointing to Doris, "happens to be Doris Dixon, of the Anti-Book Squad; she almost shot you between the eyes."

"I—I—know," quavered Betty, bed-

ragged and helpless. "I mean I know she would've killed me."

"You've got a bit to learn about book-jacking," I said.

"I'm sorry," said Betty, shuddering.

People were beginning to pour out of the house.

"Now we travel," I said, pulling her towards my aircar.

WE WERE doing three-twenty on the way back to New York.

"How will you explain it?" asked Betty.

"You can do your own explaining about your two bums," I said. "As for Doris, I'll tell her one of your gang slipped up behind us, let her have it; and took off with you. I followed, but I lost you on the road."

"I guess I've been a heel," she sighed. "But I promised father on his deathbed to keep the Congress tradition alive. And I didn't have any money; that's why I wanted your books."

"Forget it."

She was sitting as far from me as she could in the front seat. "But—why did you save me?" she insisted. "I mean—after the trouble I made."

Through her glasses, the soft eyes were accusing. The mouth trembled a little. I knew what she was thinking. Now she would have to hide out, in some apartment—like mine. And under the new morality—she would be at my mercy.

I grinned. "Sister," I said, "anytime I want a love-life I can walk down Madison Avenue. You and I are headed for Jackson's bookbar. No man or woman alive has ever read me down with a book. We're going to read and read until one of us falls asleep and loses; and it won't be me. That's why I saved you!"

She grinned. She took off her glasses, leaned back her lovely head, and closed her nice, feminine eyes to rest them for the coming ordeal.



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GO FAST ON INTERPLANE

MCFEE AND Spike hissed down the big four-lane highway. McFee was full of youth and the devil. Spike, being a brand-new Cadillon Eight, was full of histest Rocony.

It was a week-day morning and the roads were clear. McFee had been stepping it up to 65 and 70 without spotting a state-trooper; he was on the tail-end of last night's bust, and was still feeling the wine.

Spike was a sweet car. His nose was red and his fenders glossy; the concealed headlights lifted or vanished as one flicked a button on the dashboard. Speed? They had gone eighty for a couple of reckless minutes on a fine straightaway, and the motor hadn't even worked at it.

He shot past a number of small upstate towns just waking into life. Hearing the clang of a school-bell he slowed down considerably; whatever his other vices, McFee wasn't a baby-killer. The delights of the highway were manifold; it was one of the latest things laid on the map. The turns were rough-surface concrete, gripping the tires like chewing-gum.

There was a cut-off, and McFee took it in spite of the unfinished look of the road. There were hunks of concrete here and there; some road-building machinery, too—tractors and drags.

He eased his way along the lumpish

surface, noting with approval how Spike's springs cushioned him nicely as they slammed into a sack of gravel, or rolled over a smoothing-board.

The end of the rubble was marked by a sign. McFee glanced at the marker as he rolled past, then shook his head and remarked "Huh?" just as if he were in the movies. He reversed and stopped before the sign, which said:

INTPL. HWY.
CONN., US
ROUTE ONE

That wasn't all it said, but that was all McFee could read. Because the rest of what it said—right below the English—was in an alphabet he didn't know, stuff that looked like shorthand, but connected. Or like the peak-and-valley code of the language-scrambling machines.

McFee shrugged and went on down the Intpl. Hwy. Route One. It was completely deserted; he had the only car on it. But the scenery was swell—the green, rolling hills of New England, sheep here and there. He shot past another road-sign which said:

SPEED UP TO 65 MPH.

and below it more of the peak-and-valley talk. McFee obeyed, though it was a novelty to find such a request. It made sense, though. This was a high-speed road if ever there was one. For, after the speed-sign the

highway doubled, developed a parkway strip down the center and banked heavily on all turns.

There were lots of turns. Some of them didn't make sense at all, being S-shaped when there wasn't any hill to avoid climbing by the S. There were deliberately-constructed curving ramps, high piles of concrete. McFee was fighting the wheel, damning the wide play that the late model cars all had. Not that there was any danger; the road was too scientifically constructed for that. But he had to keep his eyes well on the concrete and miss the scenery. Out of the corner of his eye, he sensed that the country was changing ever so slightly. The hills were higher and more bare of foliage. Hell! He couldn't be in the Green Mountains yet—could he?

Another sign flashed by, then another in case he had missed the first. They said:

SPEED UP TO EIGHTY-FIVE MPH
and a third sign following simply added

PLEASE

They were all accompanied by the code, or whatever it was. He stepped down the gas to 85, noticed how ridges of concrete had appeared in the road so as to guide his wheels almost automatically, needing his hand on the wheel only for the more drastic curves and turns.

There were plenty of those, after a minute or two. McFee found himself tearing through the most intricate, nerve-wracking series of twists he had ever encountered. It was like 200 miles of clover-leaf intersections—at 85 miles per!

Once, he was sure, he had looped the loop in dare-devil style. Several times he had made flat circles in his own track, all on incredibly sharp banks. But he wasn't sure. All he could see was the onrushing flood of concrete spinning beneath his wheels.

Twice there were tunnels to shoot through, lighted and banked, with simple notices—in two alphabets, he presumed—to *KEEP SPEED*.

After 80 minutes of this insanity, there was the welcome sign:

SLOW TO FIFTY MPH

Only in this case, the peak-and-valley talk was above the English. He slowed to 50 and heaved a sign of relief. That Intl. Hwy. had been a gas-cooker!

Concerning the scenery, he was interested, greatly interested. The trees were nice, the grass was nice, everything was very nice. *Then what the hell was wrong?*

He shrugged and lit a cigarette. He was—naturally—jumpy after all that driving. He remembered that he hadn't slept last night.

SPIKE APPROACHED an intersection of three highways. McFee stopped to study the markers. He was still on Intl. Hwy.—again the peak-and-valley talk was above the English. The other roads were marked in p&v only. McFee drove on, with a worried thought to his gas-tank. There was a town ahead—gabled roofs, chalet-like. There were advertising-signs on the road, with terse injunctions on them, all in peak-and-valley.

McFee drove into a gas station, which carried the only English lettering he could see in the place. And scattered about the station were signs in not only English and p&v, but three other alphabets, all unfamiliar.

"Yus, sairrr!" snapped an attendant at McFee, beginning to polish the windshield. He was tall and angular, wore a blue smock.

"Fill 'er up," said McFee faintly, glimpsing the attendant's face. His ears were long and hairy; his eyes were all pupil, no white showing at all. And he didn't have individual teeth—just a white shell like a beak behind his lips, the way commercial-artists draw faces. As the attendant filled 'er up, McFee noted a bushy tail protruding from beneath the blue smock.

Joe paid him with a five dollar bill. The attendant, after referring to a little book, gave him a small pile of red and blue and green discs. As Joe took off the hand-brake he leaned in and

said: "Eet you weesh, sairrr, you may obtain thee smash-fast dorn thee rroad." He pointed to a brightly decorated shop-front. "Therrr it speaks Eengleesh good like me."

"Thanks," said McFee. The attendant presented him, as if by afterthought, with a pamphlet in English and waved at him cheerily as he drove off to the smash-fast shop. There was a sign in the window: "*English Spoken Here*". It turned out to be a much superior variety to that of the attendant.

A kind-faced person, who might possibly have been female, seated him at a high table and assured him that she'd see he got real home cooking. Meanwhile McFee, ignoring the curious ones who were staring at him—Lord, he didn't blame them!—took out the pamphlet he had been handed.

The title page said: "Highway Guide for the Interplane Traveler. Published for the Convenience of Our Patrons by the Winged Wolf Petrol Co. English Edition Published for Distribution on Intpl. IIwy. Route One Between Springfield-Earth-VI and Valley Junction (Wiog-a-Wof)-Earth-V (The Swoj)".

McFee devoured the book. It proudly announced the completion of the latest "biplanar spanning section" of the Interplane Highway into Earth-VI. Earth V, otherwise known as "The Swoj", was where he was now. The peak-and-valley writing was Swojian, as were all these smocked and hairy people.

He couldn't make much out of the technical details which the book offered in what it called "simplified, easily-understandable form for the layman's interest and amusement". It was mostly straight mathematics. The only intelligible part of the section was: "The reader will be interested to learn that the speed-torsion formulae are in the main products of Swojian science, though valuable data were collected by the Officials of Earth. There was as well considerable collaboration between the Swoj and Earth-I."

More intelligible was the "Brief His-

tory of the Interplane Highway". There at last McFee found the basis for the whole insane collusion against his peace of mind. There it was explained that "Earth" consists of a large number of coexistent planes. Many years ago the first crossing had been made from Earth-I to Earth-VI. Since then the highway had been made commercially practical and been extended to link Earths II, III, IV and VII.

"—and this new section, due to open April 15, 1953—" McFee gasped. He was three weeks early! He had gone through before—he read on "—will be an accomplished fact by the time you, visitor from Wiog-a-Wof, read this. Secret negotiations with the government of the United States have been nearly completed at this stage of writing."

McFee's smash-fast arrived in the hands of the amiable Swojian whom he regarded with new interest as a potential neighbor. She served him bacon and eggs, explaining that they had been raising chickens and hogs in anticipation of a flow of Wiog-a-Woffian tourists. English was being taught as a second language to the inhabitants of the border towns.

He ate ravenously, then continued with the booklet. There was a schedule of currencies, a digest of highway markers in Swojian, and an official greeting from the Chamber of Commerce of Tinkabog Continental Unit in the All-Swoj Federation. He was invited to enjoy himself, see the sights, report any discourtesies and generally to consider himself a public guest.

McFEE ROSE from the hefty breakfast tickled pink at being the first American tourist to see the place, thinking perhaps of writing articles about it in the Haliburton manner: "Through the Swoj with Gun and Camera". "The Poetry of Swoj". "Swoj the Mysterious". Who knows? he reflected, slipping a notch on his belt.

He inspected Spike, shooing away

the Swojian urchins who remarkably resembled puppies, and compared it with the few other machines on the streets and doubted not that it was the best thing in sight.

Driving off slowly, keeping to the Intpl. Hwy., he surveyed the scenery, noting that dogs were dressed in little jackets and that the principle livestock was a sort of de-horned goat that came in all sizes up to the gigantic.

McFee passed a number of towns, small, rustic and prosperous. He followed the road-map in the brochure out of North-West Tinkabog and thereafter wandered at will. The country was low and rolling, with occasional green hills; there were purple mountains in the far distance. He passed several cars on the highway before coming into a big intersection, slowed down to read the lengthy signpost. It informed him that to stay in the Swoj he must get off the Highway, as it continued into Earth-IV.

What the hell? He drove on into hillier country; again the highway became high-speed and the parkway appeared. There were no more English signs; the speed-up marker was in Swojian and some other language that looked like a cross of braille and hen-tracks.

There was a repetition of the unholy loops, turns, twists, hilly dips, and the whole arsenal of the previous transition into the Swoj. McFee bore it like a man and Spike took it in his stride.

McFee slowed at last to find that Earth-IV wasn't as picturesquely old-world as Earth V. It was mostly sandy waste, with big gopher-holes to accent the monotony of the view. There were people popping out and into the holes every now and then; McFee couldn't get a straight look at them because of the reflected glare of sun and sand. But there was a gas-station before one of the groups of gopher-holes. McFee sighted it far down the road and pulled in.

The station man looked like a lizard with a coolie hat. But his tail was

rat-like rather than scaly, and he had rodent's whiskers. And his smile seemed a little forced.

McFee tried English, getting nowhere; finally he pantomimed filling a gas-tank and got the response. He held out a fistful of Swojian coins after the cap was back on; the station man took a discriminating assortment and sped him on his way.

He couldn't read any of the signs, and there was damned little scenery to inspect. But it was plain where he was going when the Swojian disappeared from the markers to be replaced by strings of circles of different sizes.

McFee speeded up. Signs flashed past, one of them, big and blackly printed, in Swojian. He marvelled, and as the car plunged into a tunnel took out his handbook, turned to the section on highway signs.

Leafing through them, paying little attention to the driving, he murmured: "Ah—looks like it—" and turned for the translation on the next page:

BRIDGE OUT

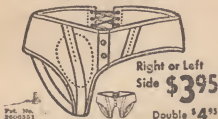
THERE WAS a shattering crash: McFee plunged down, far down, conscious of bodily and mental agony, feeling the steering-wheel come loose and come off in his hand while he wrestled with it. It was like a skid but many times worse. The lights of the tunnel had gone out for him; he wondered if his eyes had been crushed.

No, not that, for patches of roadway were falling up past him; he saw that plainly. For a moment he hung suspended in mid-air, then dropped heavily to the ground. Spike fell beside him at a few yards distance a moment later with a ponderous crunching noise, then exploded into flames as McFee scrambled for shelter beside a railway trestle's big girders.

Sadly he considered while the car burned into embers. The girders shook in his hand as a train passed overhead. He looked around for markers; he had fallen into some damned gully or other; cars were whizzing past on a hill road half up the side. He mournfully

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GO FAST ON INTERPLANE

[Continued From Page 26]

shook his head as the West Virginia State Police bounced a motorcycle over the rocks of the valley and yelled: "Anybody hurt?"

"Nope," he called back. "Only me, and I'm all right." The trooper had him make out an accident-form, and wanted to know what the hell had happened. McFee didn't bother to explain. He went from the highway patrol's cabin to a railroad station and returned to New York only long enough to buy a new Cadillac Eight and shoot up to Springfield.

The Interplane Highway was gone; there was a new road-crew there, which had been recently transferred to Springfield from Oregon. They didn't know anything except that they were supposed to keep their mouths shut. Also they were being paid by checks on the Department of Justice instead of the Department of Labor.

McFee returned to New York after a fruitless week scouting New England to read in the papers of the arrest for

Turn Page

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graft of the Connecticut Highway Commission. He observed quietly while the case was jammed through in record time, and the Commission sent to Alcatraz.

He noticed also the resignation of the Secretary of State—"for reasons of health". He noticed that the Secretary immediately undertook the running of the utilities system of Los Angeles, a full-time job which he performed to perfection.

Some years later McFee noticed that the Highway Commission, officially in Alcatraz, was seen in Panama having a riotously fine time on brand-new money.

And just the other day McFee was in Washington on business. He noted, in the parking-lot attached to the new State Department building, a car of curious make. On the hood he discerned, imperfectly scratched out, peak-and-valley characters.

"They tried again," he said to himself. "And this time—it went through!"

He was last seen in a new Cadillac Eight, studying a road-map to Springfield.



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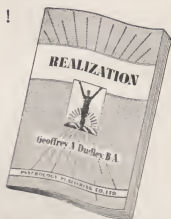
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